

**MOTORCYCLES AND MOPEDS**  
**STAYING ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE LAW WITH**  
**MOPEDS AND POCKET BIKES**

**KELLY MANNING:** Welcome to the DMV Infocast, an audio production of the Connecticut Department of Motor Vehicles. This is Kelly Manning, Infocast editor. With us today is **John Yacavone**, the Bureau Chief of the Legal Services Unit at the Department of Motor Vehicles. John is here to clarify for the residents of Connecticut the laws concerning motor scooters, mopeds, and similar types of small vehicles.

**KELLY MANNING:** John, could you please explain the laws regarding the operation of motor scooters and similar types of small vehicles?

**JOHN YACAVONE:** Yes. There are a number of small vehicles, generally two-wheeled personal vehicles, that are available for purchase today. The laws are quite different depending on the exact types of vehicles that we're talking about. There is a certain type of a vehicle, which is commonly known as a moped and is also known as a bicycle with a helper motor, that is legal for operation in Connecticut, subject to certain restrictions. These types of vehicles are defined as a vehicle that has a seat height not less than 26 inches and that's powered by a motor that has a piston displacement of less than 50 cubic centimeters. Basically these are, as I said, moped types of vehicles and they can be operated as long as the operator has a valid motor vehicle operator's license. They cannot be operated on limited access highways and in other certain locations where the traffic authority may not allow them to be operated, but in general they are legal for operation by people who have a valid license.

These moped types of vehicles need to be distinguished from the smaller types of vehicles which are also known as pocket bikes, rocket bikes, there's a number of different names for them. These are legally defined as so-called mini-motorcycles. In distinction from mopeds, these vehicles all have a seat height as

manufactured of less than 26 inches. They also have an engine that is less than 50 cubic centimeters piston displacement. The short and plain rule with regard to this type of vehicle is that it cannot be legally operated on any public highway or on any public sidewalk. These pocket bikes really are not safe to be operated in proximity to other motor vehicles. They're really just too small. They do not have quite a number of required safety components to be operated safely, and our legislature has decided that they can only be operated on private property. They cannot be operated on any sidewalk or any public highway. If they are operated in violation of the law, the police have the authority to actually seize these vehicles and take possession of them, as well as citing the operator for an infraction of the law.

I've mentioned 50-centimeter piston displacement. These are generally small motors. If two-wheel vehicles have a larger motor, they are generally eligible for registration as motorcycles, which can be lawfully operated by anyone with a valid motor vehicle operator's license that also has a motor vehicle endorsement.

**KELLY:** John, can you clarify for us again where exactly you can operate a moped?

**JOHN:** A moped cannot be operated on any sidewalk, on any limited access highway, or any turnpike. Generally they can be operated on other streets and roads. There's a speed limitation for operating a moped and that is 30 miles per hours. Most of these vehicles are not made to go over 30 miles an hour anyway, so there's not much risk that a moped as manufactured will be able to exceed 30 miles an hour, but to do so would be a violation of the law.

**KELLY:** So John, do these mopeds have to be registered at the Department of Motor Vehicles?

**JOHN:** No. Actually a moped is not eligible for registration, so there is no registration. There is no marker plate on this type of vehicle. However, as I've stated, it can be legally operated provided the operator has a valid driver's license and, again, provided that it's not operated on any sidewalk, limited access highway, or turnpike.

**KELLY:** What happens if these restrictions are violated by a person?

**JOHN:** Well, if you operate a moped in violation of any of the restrictions that I've mentioned, a police officer can cite you for an infraction. Generally an infraction is a fine of approximately \$100.

**KELLY:** Would people who operate pocket bikes illegally, would they get infractions as well?

**JOHN:** As I've stated, anyone who operates a pocket bike on a sidewalk or any public highway would be subject not only to a penalty of an infraction, which again would be a fine of approximately \$100 plus cost, but the police are allowed to take possession of any pocket bike that's being operated on a highway or a sidewalk and the pocket bike will be impounded by a period for 48 hours, and if the owner wants it back, they would have to pay the cost of taking in the storage of the vehicle.

**KELLY:** Well, John, I would like to thank you for being with us today. I'm sure you've helped many Connecticut residents better understand the laws regarding pocket bikes and mopeds.