

From the Office of the Sheriff:

“Moped or Motorcycle”

It is the time of the year that we receive numerous inquiries about mopeds, motorcycles, licensing, and the rules of the road that apply to them. Let us first define the difference between them and that will help us determine which rules of the road apply.

A moped is a vehicle with an automatic transmission and an engine of 50cc or less that, 1) complies with all federal emissions, equipment, and safety standards, and, 2) performance characteristics have not been altered to enable it to exceed 30 mph with a 150 lb operator, during dry conditionals on a level roadway with no wind.

A motorcycle is a vehicle capable of exceeding 30 mph with a 150 lb operator. A Type 1 motorcycle is, 1) designed and built with two wheels and a seat for the operator, and may be modified to three wheels without changing the location of the power source, or 2) designed with no more than three wheels and seating for the operator and no more than three passengers (sidecar).

Operators of a moped do not need a Class M “motorcycle” endorsement while those operating a motor cycle do. Do you need a Class D (auto) driver’s license to operate a motorcycle? Not necessarily, you can have just a Class M, motorcycle-only license. However, if you are operating a moped you must have a valid driver’s license.

For those who are working towards a motor cycle endorsement or an instructional permit, you have restrictions. The permit is good for six months and a person can be issued no more than three. No passengers may accompany the permit holder unless they have two years of driving experience and has a motor cycle endorsement and is riding as a passenger/instructor. The permit holder may not operate during hours of darkness unless accompanied by a licensed person at least 25 yrs of age or has two-years of experience and is cycle endorsed. There is a waiver to driver’s skill test portion of obtaining a motorcycle endorsement if the person has successfully completed a basic rider’s course.

If you are operating under an instruction permit and under 18-yrs of age, you must have a helmet with a properly fastened chin strap. Any passenger under 18-yrs old must be wearing a helmet as well. Any motor cycle carrying a passenger must be equipped with foot pegs for both operator and passenger. Motor cycle operators need glasses, goggles, or a windshield that raises a minimum of 15” above the handlebar. Operation at night requires clear lenses unless they are photo sensitive prescription. Eye wear is not required if you are in a parade.

Another twist to all of this is that a person who is at least 14-yrs old and less than 18-yrs old can apply and be issued a restricted license. Upon application, the applicant must be satisfied that it is necessary for the applicant to operate an automobile, farm truck, dual purpose farm truck, a motor cycle not more than 125 cc’s, or a type 2 motorcycle or moped. The applicant must appear, with their parents or guardian, to the examiner with a birth certificate. The applicant must pass an examination as well as a test to prove ability to safely operate the type of vehicle the applicant is making application to operate.

This is just a snap shot of the rules of the road, licensee requirements and equipment requirements for operates of mopeds and/or motor cycles. If any of this applies to you I would direct you to the applicable statutes, Chapter 343 (licensing) or Chapter 347 (Equipment). Thanks for listening, tnehl@co.dodge.wi.us.