

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2006 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 1540

(Delegate Malone)

Environmental Matters

Judicial Proceedings

Low Speed Vehicles - Slow Moving Vehicle Emblem - Application

This bill exempts low speed vehicles (LSVs) from the requirement to display a slow moving vehicle emblem.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: It is expected that the requirements of this bill could be met with existing resources.

Local Effect: It is expected that the requirements of this bill could be met with existing resources.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: An “LSV” is a four-wheeled electric vehicle with a maximum speed capability that exceeds 20 miles per hour but is less than 25 miles per hour.

The provision requiring display of a “slow moving vehicle” emblem does not apply to vehicles used by any utility in the construction, maintenance, or repair of its facilities or vehicles used by any highway authority, bridge, or highway district for construction, maintenance, repair, inspection, or survey work.

Otherwise, a person may not drive any vehicle or combination of vehicles that is designed to be and is driven at a maximum speed of 25 miles per hour on a highway

unless the rearmost vehicle displays a slow moving vehicle emblem. Any other vehicle or combination of vehicles, when driven at a speed of 25 miles per hour or less, may display a slow moving vehicle emblem.

The slow moving vehicle emblem must be a truncated equilateral triangle at least 14 inches high with a red reflective border that is at least 1.75 inches wide and a center of fluorescent orange. The emblem must comply with the standards and specifications of the American Society of Agricultural Engineers and be mounted on the rear of the vehicle, with the base down. The emblem must be displayed at least three, but no more than five feet from ground to base.

New farm equipment designed and intended by the manufacturer to be driven or moved at a maximum speed of 25 miles per hour may not be sold in Maryland unless it is equipped with a slow moving vehicle emblem as specified. The slow moving vehicle emblem must be displayed and maintained on the farm equipment as long as it can be driven or moved on a highway. A slow moving vehicle emblem may only be displayed on a vehicle as specified by the Maryland Vehicle Law.

A violation of the requirements for display of a slow moving vehicle emblem is a misdemeanor and the violator is subject to a maximum fine of \$500. The uncontested fine assessed by the District Court is \$70. Upon conviction, the Motor Vehicle Administration must assess one point against the violator's driver's license.

Background: An LSV is a speed limited battery-powered electric vehicle. Modified golf carts or similar vehicles are regarded as LSVs. They are sometimes called neighborhood electric vehicles or global electric motorcars. LSVs are usually restricted to roads with maximum speeds of 35 miles per hour. They are generally regarded as appropriate for communities that accommodate slow speed traffic. Some golf club and retirement communities are designed to encourage the use of LSVs.

In 1998, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) issued a final rule on safety standards for LSVs. NHTSA noted the growing public interest in using golf carts and other similar vehicles for short shopping trips and other recreational purposes, primarily within retirement or other planned communities. LSVs have gained popularity because they are zero-emission vehicles, relatively quiet, low-cost, and energy efficient. Traditional golf carts usually have a top speed of 15 miles per hour. LSVs have been defined in many states, including Maryland, as achieving a top speed of 25 miles per hour.

In the face of some deaths and serious injuries, NHTSA safety standards now require, among other safety features, headlamps, turn signals, parking brakes, rearview mirrors, windshields, seat belts, and vehicle identification numbers.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, *wikipedia.org*, Department of Legislative Services

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