

HOUSE BILL 216

57TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - SECOND SESSION, 2026

INTRODUCED BY

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AN ACT

RELATING TO MOTOR VEHICLES; AMENDING THE OFF-HIGHWAY MOTOR VEHICLE ACT TO REFLECT CHANGES IN THE OFF-HIGHWAY MOTOR VEHICLE INDUSTRY AND TO IMPROVE REGISTRATION ENFORCEMENT AND RESPONSIVENESS TO THE NEEDS OF OFF-HIGHWAY MOTOR VEHICLE USERS.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO:

SECTION 1. Section 66-3-1001.1 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 2005, Chapter 325, Section 1, as amended) is amended to read:

"66-3-1001.1. DEFINITIONS.--As used in the Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Act:

A. "board" means the off-highway motor vehicle advisory board;

B. "department" means the department of [game and fish] wildlife;

C. "division" means the motor vehicle division of

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1 the taxation and revenue department;

2 D. "fund" means the trail safety fund;

3 E. "off-highway motor vehicle" means a motor
4 vehicle designed by the manufacturer for operation exclusively
5 off the highway or road and includes:

6 (1) "all-terrain vehicle", which means a motor
7 vehicle fifty inches or less in width, having an unladen dry
8 weight of one thousand pounds or less, traveling on three or
9 more [low-pressure] non-highway tires and having a seat
10 designed to be straddled by the operator and handlebar-type
11 steering control;

12 (2) "off-highway motorcycle", which means a
13 motor vehicle traveling on not more than two tires and having a
14 seat designed to be straddled by the operator and that has
15 handlebar-type steering control;

16 (3) "snowmobile", which means a motor vehicle
17 designed for travel on snow or ice and steered and supported in
18 whole or in part by skis, belts, cleats, runners or low-
19 pressure tires;

20 (4) "recreational off-highway vehicle", which
21 means a motor vehicle designed for travel on four or more non-
22 highway tires, for recreational use by one or more persons, and
23 having:

24 (a) a steering wheel for steering
25 control;

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(b) non-straddle seating;

(c) maximum speed capability greater than thirty-five miles per hour;

(d) [~~gross vehicle~~] unladen dry weight [~~rating~~] no greater than [~~one thousand seven hundred fifty~~] three thousand five hundred pounds;

(e) less than eighty inches in overall width, exclusive of accessories; and

[(f) ~~engine displacement of less than one thousand cubic centimeters~~; and

(g)] (f) identification by means of a seventeen-character vehicle identification number; or

(5) by rule of the department, any other vehicles that may enter the market that fit the general profile of vehicles operated off the highway for recreational purposes;

F. "staging area" means a parking lot, trailhead or other location to or from which an off-highway motor vehicle is transported so that it may be placed into operation or removed from operation; and

G. "unpaved public roadway" means a dirt graveled street or road that is constructed, signed and maintained for regular passenger-car use by the general public."

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1 PERMIT FEES--RENEWAL--DISTRIBUTION OF FEES.--Fees shall be
2 collected and distributed as follows:

3 A. the fees for registering an off-highway motor
4 vehicle are:

5 (1) seventeen dollars (\$17.00) for each off-
6 highway motor vehicle, of which five dollars (\$5.00) is
7 appropriated to the division to defray the cost of making and
8 issuing registration certificates, validating stickers and
9 nonresident permits for off-highway motor vehicles. The
10 remaining twelve dollars (\$12.00) shall be deposited in the
11 motor vehicle suspense fund for distribution pursuant to
12 Section 66-6-23 NMSA 1978; and

13 (2) an amount determined by rule of the
14 department not to exceed forty dollars (\$40.00) for an off-
15 highway user fee for each off-highway motor vehicle, which
16 shall be distributed to the fund;

17 B. upon a change of ownership, the new owner shall
18 make application and pay registration fees of:

19 (1) seventeen dollars (\$17.00) in the same
20 manner as provided by rules of the division for original
21 registration; and

22 (2) an amount determined by rule of the
23 department not to exceed forty dollars (\$40.00) for an off-
24 highway user fee for each off-highway motor vehicle, which
25 shall be distributed to the fund;

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1 C. [except for an off highway vehicle that is
2 currently in compliance with another state's off highway
3 vehicle registration, user fee or similar law or rule
4 demonstrated by certificate of registration, permit or similar
5 evidence] the fees for a nonresident permit of an off-highway
6 motor vehicle are either:

7 (1) seventeen dollars (\$17.00), of which five
8 dollars (\$5.00) is appropriated to the division to defray the
9 cost of making and issuing registration certificates,
10 validating stickers and nonresident permits for off-highway
11 motor vehicles. The remaining twelve dollars (\$12.00) shall be
12 deposited in the motor vehicle suspense fund for distribution
13 pursuant to Section 66-6-23 NMSA 1978, and an amount determined
14 by rule of the department not to exceed forty dollars (\$40.00)
15 for each off-highway motor vehicle, which shall be distributed
16 to the fund; or

17 (2) seventeen dollars (\$17.00) for a ninety-
18 day permit, of which five dollars (\$5.00) is appropriated to
19 the division to defray the cost of making and issuing
20 registration certificates, validating stickers and nonresident
21 permits for off-highway motor vehicles. The remaining twelve
22 dollars (\$12.00) shall be deposited in the motor vehicle
23 suspense fund for distribution pursuant to Section 66-6-23 NMSA
24 1978;

25 D. except as provided in Paragraph (2) of

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1 Subsection C of this section, each nonresident permit shall be:

2 (1) good for two years after the month in
3 which the off-highway motor vehicle nonresident permit is
4 issued; and

5 (2) renewed every two years;

6 E. the off-highway user fee for each off-highway
7 motor vehicle shall be paid upon obtaining and renewing each
8 registration certificate or nonresident permit;

9 F. duplicate registration certificates and
10 nonresident permits shall be issued upon payment of a seven-
11 dollar-fifty-cent (\$7.50) fee, which is appropriated to the
12 division to defray the cost of making and issuing duplicate
13 registration certificates and nonresident permits for off-
14 highway motor vehicles;

15 G. a fee of one dollar (\$1.00) on registration
16 certificates and nonresident permits shall be collected for the
17 litter control and beautification fund; and

18 H. the department, in conjunction with other
19 agencies and departments, may establish and maintain sites to
20 collect fees and issue permits for residents and nonresidents."

21 **SECTION 3.** Section 66-3-1010.3 NMSA 1978 (being Laws
22 2005, Chapter 325, Section 11, as amended) is amended to read:

23 "66-3-1010.3. OPERATION AND EQUIPMENT--SAFETY
24 REQUIREMENTS.--

25 A. A person shall not operate an off-highway motor
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vehicle:

(1) in a careless, reckless or negligent

manner so as to endanger the person or property of another;

(2) while under the influence of intoxicating liquor or drugs as provided by Section 66-8-102 NMSA 1978;

(3) while in pursuit of and with intent to hunt or take a species of animal or bird protected by law unless otherwise authorized by the state [game] wildlife commission;

(4) in pursuit of or harassment of livestock in any manner that negatively affects the livestock's condition;

(5) on or within an earthen tank or other structure meant to water livestock or wildlife, unless the off-highway motor vehicle is on a route designated by the landowner or land management agency as an off-highway motor vehicle route;

(6) in a manner that has a direct negative effect on or interferes with persons engaged in agricultural practices:

(7) in excess of ten miles per hour within two hundred feet of a business, animal shelter, horseback rider, bicyclist, pedestrian, livestock or occupied dwelling, unless the person operates the vehicle on a closed course or track or a public roadway;

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(8) unless in possession of the person's registration certificate or nonresident permit;

(9) unless the vehicle is equipped with a spark arrester approved by the United States forest service; provided that a snowmobile is exempt from this provision;

(10) when conditions such as darkness limit visibility to five hundred feet or less, unless the vehicle is equipped with:

(a) one or more headlights of sufficient candlepower to light objects at a distance of one hundred fifty feet; and

(b) at least one taillight of sufficient intensity to exhibit a red or amber light at a distance of two hundred feet under normal atmospheric conditions;

(11) that produces noise that exceeds ninety-six decibels when measured using test procedures established by the society of automotive engineers pursuant to standard J-1287; or

(12) where off-highway motor vehicle traffic is prohibited under local, state or federal rules or regulations.

B. A person under the age of eighteen shall not operate an off-highway motor vehicle:

(1) or ride upon an off-highway motor vehicle without wearing eye protection and a safety helmet that is

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1 securely fastened in a normal manner as headgear and that meets
2 the standards established by the department;

3 (2) without an off-highway motor vehicle
4 safety permit; or

5 (3) while carrying a passenger, except for a
6 person under the age of eighteen who is:

7 (a) fully licensed to operate a motor
8 vehicle on a street or highway while carrying passengers; or
9 (b) being visually supervised from the
10 front passenger seat, as required in Subsection C or D of this
11 section.

12 C. A person under the age of eighteen but at least
13 ten years of age shall not operate an off-highway motor vehicle
14 unless the person is visually supervised at all times by a
15 parent, legal guardian or a person over the age of eighteen who
16 has a valid driver's license. This subsection shall not apply
17 to a person who is at least:

18 (1) thirteen years of age and has a valid
19 motorcycle license and off-highway motor vehicle safety permit;
20 or

21 (2) fifteen years of age and has a valid
22 driver's license, instructional permit or provisional license
23 and off-highway motor vehicle safety permit.

24 D. A person under the age of ten shall not operate
25 an off-highway motor vehicle unless:

(1) the all-terrain vehicle or recreational off-highway vehicle is an age-appropriate size-fit vehicle established by rule of the department; and

(2) the person is visually supervised at all times by a parent, legal guardian or instructor of a safety training course certified by the department.

E. An off-highway motor vehicle shall not be sold or offered for sale if the vehicle produces noise that exceeds ninety-six decibels when measured using test procedures established by the society of automotive engineers pursuant to standard J-1287. This subsection shall not apply to an off-highway motor vehicle that is sold or offered for sale only for organized competition."

SECTION 4. Section 66-3-1018 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 2005, Chapter 325, Section 20, as amended) is amended to read:

"66-3-1018. DEPARTMENT--POWERS AND DUTIES.--

A. The department shall cooperate with appropriate federal agencies, public and private organizations and corporations and local government units to implement the provisions of the Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Act.

B. The department:

(1) shall accept and evaluate all applications for approval and certification of an off-highway motor vehicle safety training organization and approve and certify those that meet the minimum criteria;

(2) shall notify the division of the office of highway motor vehicle safety training organizations that have received approval and certification;

(3) shall establish and revise as appropriate minimum criteria to approve and certify an off-highway motor vehicle safety training organization. The criteria shall include requirements for curriculum and materials for:

(a) training instructors to teach off-highway motor vehicle safety;

(b) training the public about off-highway motor vehicle safety and age-appropriate size-fit use of off-highway motor vehicles; and

(c) teaching responsible use of off-highway motor vehicles with respect to environmental considerations, private property restrictions, agricultural and rural lifestyles and cultural considerations, off-highway motor vehicle operating laws and prohibitions against operating off-highway motor vehicles under the influence of alcohol or drugs;

(4) shall implement a state off-highway motor vehicle safety training and certification program;

(5) shall adopt and promulgate rules regarding the:

(a) age-appropriate size-fit use of all-terrain vehicles or recreational off-highway motor vehicles;

(b) acceptance or accreditation of

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instruction or safety courses provided by other states; and

(c) standards covering the

specifications of eye protection and safety helmets;

(6) may recommend, with public participation and input, off-highway motor vehicle park, facility and trail locations to the state, county, tribal or local governing body or private entity that owns or administers the land upon which the park, facility or trail is located. The department shall establish criteria to recommend locations that include consideration of off-highway motor vehicle operating laws and effects on:

(a) wildlife and the environment;

(b) adjacent state, county, federal, tribal and private property;

(c) other recreational and nonrecreational uses on the same or adjacent lands; and

(d) archaeological, cultural and historic resources and customs;

(7) shall recommend restoration or, if deemed necessary, closure of off-highway motor vehicle tracks or trails to the state, county, tribal or local governing body or private entity that owns or administers the land upon which the tracks or trails are located if they pose significant or irreversible environmental damage, a danger to users or a public nuisance as determined by the department. The

department shall consider the construction of alternative tracks or trails as part of the closure process;

(8) shall accept and evaluate all applications for grants from the fund for implementation of the provisions of the Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Act. The department shall establish criteria for grants from the fund that include consideration of the:

(a) applicant's financial and legal status;

(b) applicant's management plan, including specific measures to avoid or minimize environmental damage to public and private lands and danger to users and spectators;

(c) operating budget for the park, trail, facility or staging area;

(d) availability of matching funds; and

(e) public participation and input;

(9) shall certify tour guides;

(10) shall prepare a management plan that accomplishes the purposes of the Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Act in a cost-effective manner and relies on existing agencies' available funding with specific qualifications for program implementation, which shall include joint powers agreements with the department of public safety and other law enforcement agencies for law enforcement and other agencies as appropriate

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for carrying out the provisions of the Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Act;

(11) shall develop and implement an overall enforcement strategy for the entire state that includes:

(a) cooperation with federal, state and local law enforcement agencies to provide training and educational materials related to off-highway motor vehicle use;

(b) coordination efforts related to off-highway motor vehicle use with participating law enforcement agencies;

(c) developing strategies for addressing and [mininizing] minimizing impacts on farmers and ranchers in rural agricultural areas, on hunters and anglers and on non-motorized recreationalists by off-highway motor vehicle use; and

(d) using law enforcement DUI-type "blitzes" in heavily used areas, staging areas or other problem areas;

(12) shall develop and implement an overall educational strategy for the entire state that:

(a) incorporates materials developed by the United States department of agriculture forest service program that teaches trail etiquette and respect for natural resources;

(b) includes the development of New

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Mexico-specific written, video or other educational materials and educational programs that address the impact of off-highway motor vehicles on traditional living culture, agricultural land and private property; and

(c) includes the development and maintenance of a [web site] website containing rules and regulations, safety information and educational material relating to resource protection and the impact of off-highway motor vehicles on traditional living culture, agricultural land and historical sites;

(13) shall develop an overall strategy for phased implementation of an information system to track information, such as use patterns, injury data, ecological data, natural resource data and data relating to the impact of off-highway motor vehicles on traditional living culture and on agricultural land. The strategy shall include;

(a) identification and implementation of appropriate data collecting mechanisms, such as a toll-free number or a web-based data collecting process; and

(b) development of an information system program capable of interfacing with existing government and private databases or other information systems;

(14) may implement noise enforcement by the testing of sound levels of off-highway motor vehicles at the time of registration and equip law enforcement officers with

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sound meters for field testing of sound levels;

(15) may contract with government or quasi-government agencies to conduct analysis of the impact of off-highway motor vehicle use on ~~forests, rangeland and other~~ state and local economies, public safety and natural resources and use the data obtained to make recommendations to the appropriate ~~land management~~ agency;

(16) shall review the definition of "off-highway motor vehicle" as needed to include new classes of off-highway motor vehicles as they become available in the marketplace;

(17) shall, in cooperation with the division, determine the size, composition, attachment mechanism, letter or number height and other properties of off-highway motor vehicle identification. This identification may be a traditional license plate, stick-on lettering as used for boat identification or another form of identification that is visible and readable;

(18) shall present its semiannual plans and progress to the advisory board for the board's input and response; and

(19) may collaborate with the appropriate land agencies to develop criteria for signage relating to off-road motor vehicle use, including the size, visibility, graphics and frequency of signage."

1 SECTION 5. EFFECTIVE DATE.--The effective date of the
2 provisions of this act is July 1, 2026.

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