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Commissioner

# State of Alabama Department of Revenue

(www.revenue.alabama.gov)  
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Montgomery, Alabama 36132

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Deputy Commissioner

## **MEMORANDUM**

**2012-8**

**TO:** License Plate Issuing Officials

**FROM:** Jay Starling, Assistant Director  
Motor Vehicle Division

**SUBJECT:** Mini-Trucks and Low Speed Vehicles

This memorandum will clarify several common misconceptions regarding mini-trucks and low speed vehicles.

### **Mini-trucks and low speed vehicles are not the same type of vehicle.**

A **mini-truck** is defined as a four-wheeled reduced dimension truck that is not less than 48 inches wide, with an unladen weight, including fuels and fluids, of not less than 1,500 pounds, equipped with a fully enclosed metal cab, an installed speed governor to prevent the truck from attaining a speed of more than 25 miles per hour, headlamps, stop lamps, front and rear turn signal lamps, tail lamps, reflex reflectors, a parking brake, rearview mirrors, windshield, seat belts, and a nonconforming vehicle identification number (§40-12-240). See attached picture.

A **low speed vehicle** is defined as a four-wheeled motor vehicle with a top speed not greater than 25 miles per hour, a gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) of which is less than 3,000 pounds and complying with the safety standards provided in 49 C.F.R. Section 571.500. The term includes neighborhood electric vehicles. Other examples of low speed vehicles include ATVs, UTVs, dune buggies, rail buggies, etc.

Low speed vehicle dealers and manufacturers often advertise low speed vehicles as “street legal.” Both mini-trucks and low speed vehicles are exempt from titling in Alabama; however, **the registration requirements for mini-trucks and low speed vehicles are different.** Note that both type vehicles are exempt from titling regardless of whether they can be registered.

Low speed vehicles may only be operated on the public roads if they are certified as meeting all federal and state statutes, rules, and regulations governing safety, emissions, and antitheft standards. Accordingly, the license plate issuing official must verify the following information before registering a low speed vehicle. The low speed vehicle must have a 17 digit vehicle identification number (VIN) which conforms to National Highway Safety and Traffic Administration (NHTSA) standards, and the manufacturer’s statement of origin (MSO) **must** state that the vehicle complies with the safety standards for a low speed vehicle or that the vehicle complies with Title 49 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) section 571.500. The manufacturer will also affix a decal certifying that the vehicle meets these standards. **Often the MSO or bill of sale will reflect that the low speed vehicle is for off road use only, which indicates**

**that the low speed vehicle cannot be licensed for use on the roadways.** If the MSO or bill of sale states “off road use only”, the vehicle cannot be registered.

**A mini-truck may only be issued a mini-truck license plate** and cannot operate on interstate highways (§32-6-59). Mini-truck license plates are ordered through the Plate Reservation and Ordering System (PROS) and will be mailed to the registrant.

**Prior to issuing a license plate or transferring a license plate for use on a motor vehicle that is not required to be titled, the license plate issuing official must physically inspect the vehicle to verify that the VIN on the vehicle is the same as the VIN on the documents required to register the vehicle [§32-8-32(b)].** This inspection will also enable license plate issuing officials to determine whether the vehicle can be registered in Alabama. Operation of vehicles that are not intended for use on the roadways, regardless of whether they are registered, may subject the vehicle operator to citation by law enforcement. Note that county license plate issuing officials may utilize form MVT 5-10 (see attachment) to appoint government officials to inspect vehicles located in Alabama on their behalf.

If you have any questions, please contact the Registration Section at (334) 242-9006 or [tags@revenue.alabama.gov](mailto:tags@revenue.alabama.gov).



*Mini-truck*



ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE  
MOTOR VEHICLE DIVISION  
Montgomery, AL 36132

MVT 5-10  
4/12  
FOR USE BY  
LICENSING OFFICIALS  
ONLY

## Motor Vehicle Inspection by a Government Official

### PART I – Vehicle Inspection *(complete in full)*

**NOTE:** Examine Public VIN Plate and make certain that the rivets are intact and the VIN has not been altered.

Vehicle Identification Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Make: \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_ Model: \_\_\_\_\_

Body Type: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of Cylinders: \_\_\_\_\_

Color: \_\_\_\_\_ Odometer Reading: \_\_\_\_\_

Other Description or Comments (if any): \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby certify that I completed the information above from a physical inspection of the motor vehicle and that all information is true and correct.

Name of Official (Print): \_\_\_\_\_

► Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Agency: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone No.: \_\_\_\_\_

Agency Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

### PART II – Appointment of Deputy by a Licensing Official

I hereby accept the certification of physical inspection of the motor vehicle as completed above and I appoint this official as my deputy for the purpose of this physical inspection required of me personally or **through any of my deputies** by State law. I further certify that the vehicle identification number and vehicle description completed above are the same as the information shown on the application for certificate of title and/or registration.

► Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Licensing Official: \_\_\_\_\_ Designated Agent No.: \_\_\_\_\_

**NOTE:** This form may be provided to owners of motor vehicles that cannot be driven or delivered to the licensing official's office for a physical inspection because of the size of vehicle or for other special reasons.

Please instruct the owner to deliver this form and the vehicle to a government official for inspection.

Please be reminded that the vehicle to be titled or registered must be located in Alabama.

# Guidelines for Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) Inspections by License Plate Issuing Officials and Their Deputies

1. All motor vehicles\* not required to be titled, other than utility trailers, being registered for the first time in this state in the past two years, must be physically inspected by the license plate issuing official. All vehicles required to be titled must be physically inspected by the license plate issuing official whenever that official is processing an application for first Alabama certificate of title. The physical inspection requirements do not apply to the following:
  - a. Registration renewals;
  - b. Vehicles registered pursuant to Section 32-6-56, *Code of Alabama 1975* (IRP-registered vehicles);
  - c. Motor vehicles owned by a manufacturer or dealer and held for sale or registered with dealer or manufacturer plates.
2. License plate issuing officials may appoint a government official, including a law enforcement officer, as a deputy for the purpose of inspecting a motor vehicle.
3. All vehicles, other than trailers, must have a unique VIN. It is the registrant's responsibility to ensure that the VIN is permanently affixed to the vehicle. The VIN is not required to be 17 characters on trailers or on 1980 and prior year model motor vehicles.
4. Required ownership documentation for first time registrations for non-titled motor vehicles is a bill of sale that contains the minimum requirements established in Department of Revenue Administrative Rule 810-5-1-.246. The VIN on the vehicle must be compared to the number appearing on the ownership documentation to ensure that the correct vehicle is being registered.

## General Inspection Guidelines

Where to find the VIN on the vehicle:

1. Passenger vehicles/pickup trucks – driver's side windshield or inside driver's door jamb
2. Motorcycle – on front fork
3. Trailer – on trailer frame or tongue
4. Assembled vehicles – driver's door jamb
5. Homemade trailers – on trailer frame or tongue
6. 1954 and prior year vehicles – inner fender well or driver's door post. Motor number is to be used as VIN if there is not a VIN plate on the vehicle.

## \*Exemptions

- (1) Effective January 1, 2012, no certificate of title shall be issued for any manufactured homes, trailer, semi-trailer, travel trailer, or folding or collapsible camping trailer more than twenty (20) model years old. This exemption is applicable on January 1 of each year and applies to all manufactured homes, trailers, semi-trailers, travel trailers, and folding or collapsible camping trailers with a model year, as designated by the manufacturer, older than twenty (20) years from the current calendar year. All utility trailers, other than folding or collapsible camping trailers, are still exempt from titling regardless of the year model.

Example: As of January 1, 2012, all 1991 and prior year model manufactured homes, trailers, semi-trailers, travel trailers, and folding or collapsible camping trailers are exempt from the titling provisions of Chapter 8, Title 32, *Code of Alabama 1975*.

- (2) Effective January 1, 2012, no certificate of title shall be issued for any motor vehicle more than thirty-five (35) model years old. This exemption is applicable on January 1 of each year and applies to all motor vehicles with a model year, as designated by the manufacturer, older than thirty-five (35) years from the current calendar year.

Example: As of January 1, 2012, all 1976 and prior year model motor vehicles are exempt from the titling provisions of Chapter 8, Title 32, *Code of Alabama 1975*.

- (3) Effective January 1, 2012, no certificate of title shall be issued for a low speed vehicle. A low speed vehicle is defined as a four-wheeled motor vehicle with a top speed of not greater than 25 miles per hour, a gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) of which is less than 3,000 pounds and complying with the safety standards provided in 49 C.F.R. Section 571.500. The term includes neighborhood electric vehicles.