

When a golf cart is a golf car

Making some sense out of FMVSS No. 100

By BILL SIURU

For years, golfers have used electric and gasoline-power golf carts without the Washington bureaucrats giving them any thought. Then people living in gated communities, largely retirees in retirement communities in the sunbelt, started using them for transportation off the golf course and on public roads. Somewhere along the way, the golf cart got a new title, "Neighborhood Electric Vehicle" or simply NEV.

Realizing a potentially large market, Canada's Bombardier brought out its Bombardier NV[tm] with a top speed of 25 mph that could be operated on and off the golf course.

Seeing an increasing number of golf carts on city streets and recognizing better performing NEV, states like Arizona, California and Florida saw a need for ordinances covering where they could be driven and minimum equipment required. The

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Deere/K-State

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ing to Porter, Deere's latest product development, a spraying system that works off global positioning systems (GPS), will be part of the equipment mix.

"They can absolutely pinpoint where they want to go with the spray," said Porter. "A lot of pests, insects or weeds, like to come back to the same spot every year. This will help superintendents track where they sprayed, and in turn, they will know where to spray the next year because they'll know where and when its going to show up. Instead of spraying for symptoms they'll be able to spray in advance of those symptoms."

John Deere hopes to announce the GPS spraying system in 1999.

As part of the agreement, John Deere will also be the exclusive supplier to golf courses owned by Jim Colbert and a preferred equipment brand at golf courses managed by Colbert.

Ground-breaking ceremonies for Colbert Hills were held on June 12 on the 1,200-acre site, three or four miles from the football stadium, on the northwest corner of town.

The Jeff Brauer designed course will meander through several valleys, and a few of the holes will have trees, he said, but "the predominant character is konza prairie."

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federal government, namely the Federal Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHSTA) saw another chance to protect us from danger, real or imagined. The result is the proposed Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard

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(FMVSS) 100 covering "low-speed vehicles."

Contrary to comedienues on late-night TV shows who joked about golf cart needing air bags and crash testing, Standard 100 is far less draconian. First, it calls out the difference between a "golf car" and a "golf cart." Quoting from the proposed standard, "Golf cart means a motor vehicle, whose speed attainable in 1 mile does not exceed 15 mph, used to convey one or more persons and equipment to play the game of golf in an area designated as a golf course."

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When is a cart a car?

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In contrast, "Golf car means a motor vehicle, whose speed attainable in 1 mile exceeds 15 mph but does not exceed 25 mph, used to convey one or more persons and equipment to play the game of golf in an area designated as a golf course."

Also defined is a "Low-speed vehicle means a motor vehicle, other than a motorcycle, whose speed attainable in 1 mile does not exceed 25 mph."

Most important the standard applies to golf cars and low-speed vehicles, namely NEVs, operated on the public streets, roads, and highways. It does NOT apply to golf carts which cannot go faster than 15 mph.

The standard requires the following equipment on golf cars and LSVs - headlamp, front and rear turn signal lamps, taillamps, stop lamps and one red reflex reflector on each side as far to the rear as practicable and located not less than 15 inches nor more than 60 inches above the road surface.

They must also have an exterior mirror mounted on the driver's side of the vehicle and either an exterior mirror mounted on the passenger's side of the vehicle or an interior mirror, parking brake and a windshield marked "AS 1" by its prime glazing material manufacturer.

Also required are Type 1 or Type 2 seat belts conforming to Sec. 571.209 Motor Vehicle Safety Standard No. 209, Seat belt assemblies, installed at each designated seating position. Finally, there must be a label permanently affixed, visible to the operator when seated, which reads: "WARNING: This vehicle must not be operated on the public roads at a speed more than 25 mph." There is neither requirements for air bags or crash testing.

Note there are some NEVs on the market such as the Gizmo, Sparrow, Twike and City-elthat are not governed by the standards. That is because they have only three wheel and qualify as motorcycles.

Are safety requirements required on golf cars? Probably not. During hearings during formulation of the new standard, only one instance of an accident with a golf cart was reported. A teenager joy riding in a stolen golf cart lost control and rolled it. However, one plus is that there will be a national standard for low-speed vehicles rather than a hodge-podge of regulations issued by states and even individual communities.

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