
CONSENT

Bill No: AB 2453

Author: Michelle Rodriguez (D) and Davies (R), et al.

Amended: 5/28/26 in Senate

Vote: 21

SENATE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE: 13-0, 6/9/26

AYES: Cortese, Strickland, Archuleta, Arreguín, Blakespear, Dahle, Gonzalez, Grayson, Menjivar, Richardson, Seyarto, Valladares, Wiener

SENATE NATURAL RES. & WATER COMMITTEE: 7-0, 7/1/26

AYES: Becker, Seyarto, Allen, Cabaldon, Grove, Laird, Stern

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: Senate Rule 28.8

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 66-0, 5/7/26 (Consent) - See last page for vote

SUBJECT: Vehicles: off-highway motor vehicles

SOURCE: City of Carlsbad

DIGEST: This bill authorizes a first responder to operate an off-highway motor vehicle (OHV) on a highway under certain conditions, as specified.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

1) Defines an “off-highway motor vehicle” to be:

a) A motorcycle, snowmobile, sand/dune buggy, all-terrain vehicle, jeep, “recreational” OHV, off-highway electric motorcycle;

b) Any vehicle that is operated off-highway; and,

- c) An OHV operated by a non-resident of the state.
- 2) Defines highway as “a way or place of whatever nature, publicly maintained and open to the use of the public for purposes of vehicular travel. Highway includes street.”
- 3) Defines, in part, a peace officer to be a sheriff, undersheriff, or deputy sheriff of a county, a chief of police of a city or chief, director, or chief executive officer of a consolidated municipal public safety agency that performs police functions, a police officer, employed in that capacity and appointed by the chief of police or chief, director, or chief executive of a public safety agency, of a city, a chief of police, or police officer of a district.
- 4) Defines a first responder to mean an employee of the state or a local public agency who provides emergency response services, including a peace officer, a firefighter, a paramedic, an emergency medical technician or a public safety dispatcher or public safety telecommunicator.
- 5) Authorizes a peace officer to operate an OHV on highway only during an emergency response situation.
- 6) Establishes OHV rules and regulations of the “off-road” including those governing registration, license, speed, safety, age, unauthorized access, reckless driving, compliance with, for example, signage, environmental protection, and anti-littering requirements (*e.g.*, Vehicle Code §§38280-38321). Any operator of an OHV must be able to reach and operate all controls necessary to safely operate the OHV.

This bill:

- 1) Authorizes a first responder to operate an OHV on highway in an emergency response situation.
- 2) Authorizes a peace officer and first responder to operate an OHV on a highway while performing official duties if an OHV is only operated or driven on highway for up to five miles for purposes of accessing an off-highway operational area or location of patrol.

- 3) Requires a local authority to adopt a policy or plan, subject to public review, for the use of OHVs for the abovementioned purposes and include the following elements:
 - a) A description of the activities or locations for which the local authority seeks to authorize operation of OHVs and the approximate timeframe or duration of the authorization.
 - b) A description of any training, certification, or safety equipment that will be required by the local authority to ensure the safety of the public, including drivers and passengers.
- 4) Expressly authorizes a local authority to regulate the operation of an OHV by peace officers and first responders while performing official duties subject to the requirements above.

Comments

Purpose of the bill. According to the author, "California's first responders and peace officers are frequently required to operate 1 off-highway vehicles (OHVs) in emergency, rescue, and public safety situations where regular vehicles cannot go. However, getting these OHVs to the locations where they are needed is often difficult because existing passenger-safety requirements may be infeasible in these contexts, and current operational restrictions prohibit OHVs from traveling any distance on surface streets or thoroughfares, thereby limiting response effectiveness and efficiency. Current law was designed for recreational use and does not account for the urgent, unpredictable conditions under which these professionals must act to protect life and property. This bill provides a narrow and practical exemption to ensure that first responders and peace officers can perform their duties effectively without being constrained by provisions that were not intended for first responder operations or urgent situations. By clarifying that these requirements do not apply in the course of official duties, the bill promotes public safety while recognizing the unique demands placed on those who respond in critical situations."

What is an OHV? OHVs are vehicles designed to be operated off-highway and can generally be categorized into three groups: all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), recreational off-road vehicles (ROVs), or utility terrain vehicles (UTVs). ATVs have three or more tires, a straddle seat for the operator, and handlebars for steering control. ROVs and UTVs have four or more tires, non-straddle or "side-by-side" seating,

and automotive-type controls for steering, throttle, and braking (i.e., a steering wheel and pedals). UTVs are generally equipped with larger cargo beds and can be retrofitted for law enforcement purposes by installing emergency lighting, sirens, logos, communications devices, and cab enclosures.

While OHVs are not required to be registered with the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) in the same fashion as standard on-road vehicles, OHVs are required to be registered with DMV and display a DMV-issued ID plate or sticker when operating on public land with registration renewal every two years.

Law enforcement and OHVs. Over the past several decades, law enforcement entities have increasingly utilized OHVs for their day-to-day operations. Manufacturers of OHVs advertise these specialized vehicles can be utilized for supporting patrols of communities, facilities, and land (i.e. parking enforcement, park or beach patrol) or providing safety and security during large events (i.e. special events, parades, marathons, and festivals). Generally, law enforcement or first responders have also used OHVs for search and rescue, remote patrols (i.e. trails), and medical or emergency incident response. While current law allows for peace officers to operate an OHV on a highway during an emergency situation, the provisions specified in this bill expand the scope of OHV usage to all first responders (as defined by state law) and would allow OHV usage on a highway for both emergency purposes and non-emergency purposes, for up to five miles, to reach an off-highway recreational area or a location of patrol.

Supporters of this measure include a number of municipalities which assert the provisions specified in this bill will enhance local entities' ability to protect public safety without imposing any new costs or regulatory burdens on local government.

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: No

SUPPORT: (Verified 8/3/26)

City of Carlsbad (source)
City of Ontario
Orange County Fire Authority
San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department

OPPOSITION: (Verified 8/3/26)

None received

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 66-0, 5/7/26

AYES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Castillo, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Elhawary, Ellis, Fong, Gabriel, Garcia, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Jackson, Johnson, Kalra, Krell, Lackey, Lee, Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Sanchez, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Ta, Tangipa, Ward, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

NO VOTE RECORDED: Arambula, Bonta, Chen, Flora, Gallagher, Hart, Hoover, Irwin, Papan, Petrie-Norris, Celeste Rodriguez, Valencia, Wallis, Wicks

Prepared by: Manny Leon / TRANS. / (916) 651-4121
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