

SHERIFF'S CORNER

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This summer our Office has received inquiries on golf cart operation on County and Township roadways. Often a popular form of transportation around private property, we have seen an increase in golf cart complaints related to golf carts operating on roadways and within road rights of way in a variety of uses including transportation to and from towns and cities, lakes, other properties and with a variety of operators from young to old. Generally, the use of these types of carts are not safe to operate on roadways and their use could be cited as an illegal operation. Motorized golf carts are not titled or registered with the Department of Public Safety, and ordinarily they cannot be operated on public roads. The vehicles that are not registered with the Department of Public Safety in the manner of other motor vehicles and do not require titling or license plates. In Minnesota, golf carts are not generally allowed on public roads because they don't meet the safety standards required for regular vehicles. There are numerous safety concerns related to golf cart use on public roadways. Golf carts lack the safety features of automobiles like airbags, robust braking systems, and seat belts, making them less safe in collisions with larger vehicles. Speed Limitations are also a factor, Golf carts typically can't exceed 20 mph, which can be dangerous on roads with higher speed limits where traffic moves much faster. (Minnesota House Research Department)

By Minnesota state statute, golf carts are generally not allowed on county or township roads (paved or gravel) unless specifically authorized by local ordinance. Many counties and cities have ordinances that allow golf carts on certain roads, often with restrictions on where and how they can be used. Cass County does not have a county wide ordinance allowing the use of golf cart type vehicles on its road, with the expectation of ordinance 2002-01, an ordinance regulating the use of golf carts on City and County Roads within the city of Lake Shore, MN within Cass County.

Minnesota Statute 169.045: governs the use of low-power vehicles, including golf carts, on public roadways.

- This statute allows counties, cities, and towns to authorize golf cart use on roadways under their jurisdiction through ordinance.
- **Local ordinances are key.** If a county or city has an ordinance that permits golf carts on designated roadways, then golf carts can be operated on those roads.
- **Restrictions often apply.** These ordinances often include restrictions on where and how golf carts can be used, such as:
 - Designated roadways (often with lower speed limits)
 - Specific times of day (e.g., not between sunset and sunrise unless equipped with lights)
 - Requirements for permits, insurance, and safety equipment are regulated.
- **County vs. City jurisdiction.** It's important to note that a permit issued by a city may not authorize golf cart use on county roads, and vice versa. Separate permits may be required for different jurisdictions. It is important to check with the jurisdiction within the area you plan to operate to check legal requirements and regulations.
- **Safety is paramount.** Even when permitted, golf carts must adhere to safety regulations, including speed limits, lighting requirements, and other safety equipment, as outlined in the authorizing ordinance.

In Summary to ensure safety and compliance we request that you:

- **Operate golf carts only on private property** unless local laws explicitly permit use on public roads.
- **Follow property-specific rules** and obtain permission if the land isn't yours.
- **Avoid public streets and sidewalks** unless the cart is street-legal and local ordinances allow it.
- **Use caution near pedestrians, buildings, and other vehicles,** even on private land.

Sticking to private property minimizes legal risks and helps prevent accidents.

If you have specific questions that you would like answered in this column or in person, please feel free to contact me anytime using one of the following methods:

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