



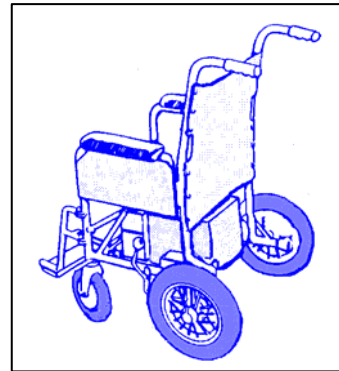
IB-115A

Vehicle Safety and Standards Information Bulletin

Motorised Wheelchairs Information for Users

What is motorised wheelchair?

The term “motorised wheelchair” as used in this bulletin applies to motorised wheelchairs powered by internal combustion engines or electric motors, and 3 or 4 wheeled electric scooters, all of which must only used as mobility aids and must be limited to a **maximum speed of 10 km/h**.

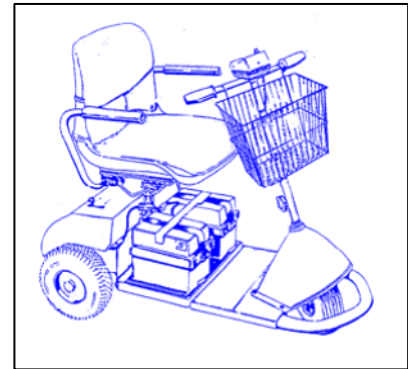


Do I need any kind of licence for a motorised wheelchair?

No. A rider in a motorised wheelchair is considered to be a pedestrian, as long as the chair is limited to a top speed of 10 km/h. Therefore there is no need to license either the driver or the chair.

Can I modify my a motorised wheelchair to make it travel faster?

Generally, no - If an electric wheelchair or scooter was made capable of travelling significantly faster than 10 km/h, it would be considered to be a motor vehicle, subject to the same licensing and safety requirements as other motor vehicles. In general, this would render the wheelchair or scooter illegal, since it would be impractical to bring it up to the required standards of occupant protection, braking, lighting, etc.



If you do have a need to modify your wheel chair or scooter to travel faster, please contact Vehicle Safety and Standards for approval before proceeding with any modification. If the modification is approved be aware that you would need to obtain an appropriate drivers licence and register your modified motorised wheelchair or scooter.

Important note: If you have a wheelchair or scooter that has been illegally modified to increase its top speed, then it must be converted back to its original form.

Where can I go with my exempt motor chair?

The main rule to consider here is that, for all intents and purposes, a motorised wheelchair has the same status as a pedestrian, as long as it is limited to a top speed of 10 km/h. However, you must exercise common sense and avoid dangerous situations.

In particular, do not use makeshift walking ramps, wooden platforms, etc. if you are not sure that they can support the combined weight of yourself and your wheelchair or scooter.

Travelling in outdoor areas

Under the Road Traffic Code, you must follow the same rules as pedestrians:

- Where a footpath is provided, you must use it.
- If crossing a road, you must use the shortest possible path.
- Before you begin to cross a road, you should make sure that you have a safe entry onto the footpath on the other side.
- Where a footpath is not provided, you may travel along the edge of the roadway, unless the road rules prohibit you from doing so. You must travel along the right edge of the roadway, facing towards oncoming traffic.
- You should not travel along the edge of the roadway unless you absolutely have to and the design of the motorised wheelchair allows it to be safely driven on the expected terrain.

Travelling in indoor / confined areas

Wherever and whenever it is safe and practical, you may go anywhere a pedestrian may go in a motorised wheelchair.

If the exempt motor chair is to be used indoors or in confined spaces, then it should not be powered by any type of internal combustion engine.

Other safety considerations

There is a wide variety of exempt motor chairs on the market, each suited to a certain range of uses and requirements. In choosing a machine, there are a number of important safety considerations, including:

- Type of terrain the machine will be used on - A machine with small, hard wheels may be fine on smooth paths, but dangerously unstable on softer and/or rougher ground.
- Travelling range (influenced by the number of batteries and overall mass).
- Overall mass - how easy is it to transport and handle the machine?
- Will it be necessary to transport the machine by car? If so, what type of wheelchair carrier will be used? Is the car large enough to tow the carrier?

If you intend to buy an exempt motor chair, you are advised to contact experts in this field, the Independent Living Centre or any similar organisation that can give you advice and or show you a range of demonstration machines.

Related documents and links

- Road Traffic Code 2000 can be accessed on State Law Publisher website (www.slp.wa.gov.au)
- Independent Living Centre (www.ilc.com.au)

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