

# GREATER SUN CITY CENTER GOLF CART DRIVERS HANDBOOK



COURTESY OF



*Sun City Center*

In partnership with **Tampa Bay Times**



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*Hillsborough County*  
*Tampa, Florida 33601*

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Dear Friends:

The State of Florida provides residents with the privilege of using golf carts in and about the town. This is a lifestyle benefit many of you enjoy. A high degree of care and knowledge in the operation of golf carts is essential when drivers share the public roadways with automobiles, trucks, buses, bicycles and pedestrians.

The Greater Sun City Center continues to provide assistance and education to golf cart drivers in Sun City Center to ensure that they stay safe and are knowledgeable about the rules of the road when operating their vehicles. This is accomplished through one valuable resource, the *Greater Sun City Center Golf Cart Drivers Handbook*. The handbook provides important guidance and instruction on golf cart operations, and is a valuable tool to ensure the safety of golf cart drivers, pedestrians and other roadway travelers. I recommend that golf cart drivers carefully review the *Greater Sun City Center Golf Cart Drivers Handbook* to ensure community safety and to promote knowledge of applicable Florida laws regarding the use of golf carts.

I thank the Greater Sun City Center for their continued endeavor to promote safety. The Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office remains committed to supporting their work to ensure the safety of the community and our roadways.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Gee".

David Gee  
Sheriff

Florida Statutes 316.212  
[www.leg.state.fl.us/STATUTES/](http://www.leg.state.fl.us/STATUTES/)  
TITLE XXIII MOTOR VEHICLES CH. 316-324



# THE 2011 STATE LAW SUMMARIZED

The laws of the State of Florida do not require licenses for the drivers of golf carts as long as the golf cart is operated in accordance with the laws.

Nor is the golf cart required to be registered with the Division of Motor Vehicles or carry a license plate.

Florida Statutes 316.212 and 316.2125 limit the operation of golf carts to streets designated for such use.

## CAUTION

VIOLATING FLORIDA STATUTES 316.212, 316.2125 OR OTHER PROVISIONS OF THE FLORIDA STATUTES MAY RESULT IN BEING ISSUED A TRAFFIC CITATION.

## REMEMBER

DRIVING IS A PRIVILEGE AND NOT A RIGHT; PROTECT YOURSELF AND OTHERS BY OBEYING THE LAWS AND DRIVING SAFELY. THE LIFE YOU SAVE MAY BE YOUR OWN OR A LOVED ONE'S.

- 1) **MOTOR VEHICLE** as defined in the Florida Statutes: An automobile, motorcycle, truck, trailer, semitrailer, truck tractor and semitrailer combination, or any other vehicle operated on the roads of this state, used to transport persons or property, and propelled by power other than muscular power. This term does not include traction engines, road rollers or such vehicles as run only upon a track, bicycles or mopeds.
- 2) **GOLF CART:** A motor vehicle that is designed and manufactured for operation on a golf course for sporting or recreational purposes and that is not capable of exceeding speeds of 20 miles per hour.
  1. Golf carts may only be operated on roads that have a posted speed limit of 30 miles per hour or less.
  2. This does not prohibit a golf cart from crossing the road or street at a designated golf cart crossing where the road or street has a posted speed limit of more than 30 miles per hour.
  3. A golf cart may not be operated on public roads or streets by any person under the age of 14.
  4. A golf cart shall not be driven on a sidewalk. Florida Statute 316,1995, states, "No person shall drive any vehicle, other than by human power, upon a bicycle path, sidewalk or sidewalk area, except upon a permanent or duly authorized temporary driveway.
  5. A golf cart may be operated only during the hours between sunrise and sunset, unless the responsible governmental entity has determined that a golf cart may be operated during the hours between sunset and sunrise and the golf cart is equipped with headlights, brake lights, turn signals and a windshield. In Sun City Center, a golf cart may be operated only during the hours between sunrise and sunset.
  6. A golf cart must be equipped with efficient brakes, a reliable steering apparatus, safe tires, a rearview mirror and red reflectorized warning devices in both front and rear.
  7. Golf carts are not permitted to be driven on main roads west of South Bay Hospital. These roads and streets are not approved for golf carts since the speed limit exceeds 30 miles per hour. Carts can, however, use the cart paths provided on those main roads. A golf cart also may cross those roads at a designated golf cart crossing.

3) **LOW-SPEED VEHICLE** means any four-wheeled electric vehicle whose top speed is greater than 20 miles per hour but not greater than 25 miles per hour, including neighborhood electric vehicles. Low-speed vehicles must comply with the safety standards in 49 C.F.R. s. 571.500 and s. 316.2122.

1. Low-speed vehicles may be operated on roads that have a posted speed limit of 35 miles per hour or less.
2. This does not prohibit a low-speed vehicle from crossing a road or street at an intersection where the road or street has a posted speed limit of more than 35 miles per hour.
3. A low-speed vehicle must be registered and insured in accordance with Florida Statute 320.02.
4. Any person operating a low-speed vehicle must have in his or her possession a valid driver license.
5. A low-speed vehicle must be equipped with headlights, brake lights, tail-lights, reflex reflectors, parking brakes, rearview mirrors, windshield, seat belts and vehicle identification numbers.

## WHERE TO CROSS SR 674

In Sun City Center, the crossing of State Road 674 is permitted only at the following three locations:

1. Kings Boulevard / Valley Forge Drive
2. Trinity Lakes Drive / Sun City Center Plaza
3. Pebble Beach Boulevard

Golf carts are not, under any circumstances, permitted to make a right or left turn on to SR 674. They may, however, travel on the designated golf cart path which runs along the south side of SR 674, and the north side of SR 674 from South Bay Hospital to the Cypress Village Shopping Center parking lot.

## AUTO VS. GOLF CART

A golf cart is very much like an automobile. It is built something like an auto, rolls on air-inflated tires and has auto-like parts such as leaf springs, axles, brakes and gear boxes. New golf carts steer like autos, and passengers ride sitting down on cushioned seats. They attain good speed and carry useful loads.

But, as compared with automobiles, safety is sacrificed in many ways. The ratio of their maximum turning angle to their normal speed is much higher, rendering them easy to roll over on a sharp turn. Their braking systems are limited due to reduced mechanical leverage in the brake system and the relatively low pressure of treads on the road surface.

Of passenger protection on a golf cart, there is practically nothing: no seat belts, no restraining sides or doors, no impact-absorption features of any kind.

Awareness of this difference should make the golf cart operator more careful as he or she wheels around our streets.

Never move your golf cart until you have looked in front, behind and to the side for pedestrians and oncoming traffic. Then, signal and pull into traffic when safe.



## CHILDREN DRIVERS

Children are not allowed to drive golf carts on our streets, unless 14 years old or older, even when accompanied by an adult.

Even though your grandchildren beg to drive your golf cart, give a firm "NO" unless they are of driving age (14) and are experienced drivers.

In a critical situation, the adult would not be able to take over the controls quickly enough to avoid an accident.

## SUPREME COURT DECISION

The Florida Supreme Court held December 20, 1984, that golf carts should be included within the dangerous instrumentality doctrine previously enunciated by the court. The court stated that a golf cart, when negligently operated on a golf course, has the same ability to cause serious injury as does any motor vehicle operated on a public highway. It held "that the dangerous instrumentality doctrine which imposes liability upon the owner of a dangerous agency, when he entrusts it to someone who negligently operates it, applies to golf carts."

The significance of this decision is that it imposes liability on the owner, whether the owner or his grandchildren or another person with permission is operating the golf cart.

The decision applies to golf course operation; but it would also apply with equal or greater force to operation of a golf cart on a public right-of-way.

## RULES OF TRAFFIC

The Florida Driver's Handbook should be at hand in every home where there is a car or a golf cart. Even licensed, experienced auto drivers have lapses. The person who is taught to be cautious with his 250-horsepower sedan slides into his three- to 10-horsepower open golf cart and lets down his guard. The most experienced drivers ignore stop signs, fail to signal at turns, drive in the wrong lane and back up without looking. There is a suspension of operator awareness because the speed is low and the golf carts are so maneuverable.

Golf cart owners without auto experience are at extra risk. They have not learned the rules of the road for autos; they have not developed an involuntary signal response when they plan to turn or stop; they have not had experience with crisis situations.

To focus attention where most danger lurks, consultations have been held with experts from the Florida Highway Patrol and the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office. Golf cart industry people have been interviewed, along with various insurers. Other golfing communities have been studied; insurance agencies of Sun City Center and Kings Point West have been invited to record their observations; and presidents of each golfing group have provided their perspectives.

## PEDESTRIANS AND BICYCLISTS

It is the driver's responsibility to do everything possible to avoid colliding with any pedestrian, bicyclist or other person. At any non-signalized intersection, marked mid-block crossing or driveway, motorists must yield to pedestrians wishing to cross the street or driveway. At signalized intersections, before making any turn, motorists must yield to pedestrians and bicyclists.

## ACCIDENT CAUSES

Out of all the foregoing, the following are major contributors to serious accidents:

1. Making turns without looking and signaling.
2. Backing up without waiting and warning.
3. Entering traffic lanes without stopping.
4. Speeding beyond the ability to maintain control.
5. Driving in a manner dangerous to passengers
6. Traveling in an improper traffic lane — stay to the right.
7. Driving after dark without headlights or taillights.
8. Operating an improperly maintained cart.

Discussion of these is based on the Florida Driver's Handbook.

## THE HONOR SYSTEM

Golf cart drivers in this community operate on what may be called the "honor system." Whereas auto drivers must take a four-part examination to determine whether they are fit to drive (road signs, vision, road rules and driving), golf cart drivers need no official certification.

Moreover, golf cart operators are not required to have proof of financial responsibility, as do auto drivers.

Thus, we should feel honor bound to know about and comply with driving laws and all rules of common sense.

Always slow down before entering an intersection. Check for traffic by looking first to the left and then right, then again to the left to make sure the way is clear before proceeding. You should have the slowest speed just before entering the intersection so that you will be able to stop, if necessary.

When you enter an open intersection (one without traffic control signs or signals), you must yield the right-of-way to a vehicle which has already entered the intersection.

When you enter an open intersection about the same time as another vehicle, the driver on the left shall yield to the driver on the right.

When entering a street or highway from an alley or driveway, you must stop before crossing the sidewalk and yield to all pedestrians and approaching vehicles.



## RIGHT-OF-WAY

The law gives the right-of-way to no one. It only says who must yield (give up) the right-of-way. Every individual must do everything possible to avoid an accident.



## MAKING TURNS

Turning a corner may seem to be a simple operation, but many traffic crashes are caused by drivers who do not turn correctly.

There are nine steps in making a good turn:

1. Make up your mind about your turn before you get to the turning point.  
Never make "last minute" turns.
2. Look behind and to both sides to see where other vehicles are if you must change lanes before making your turn. Give your turn signal before changing lanes, also.
3. Move into the correct lane as you near the intersection. The correct lane for a right turn is the lane next to the right edge of the roadway. On a two-lane road with traffic in both directions, an approach for a left turn should be made in the part of the right half of the roadway nearest the center line.
4. Give a turn signal for at least the last 100 feet before you make your turn. Let other drivers know what you are going to do.
5. Slow down to a safe turning speed.
6. When you are slowing to make a right turn, the bicyclist you passed may be catching up to you. Look over your shoulder before turning. Yield to bicyclists and pedestrians.
7. When turning left, you may be crossing the path of a pedestrian or bicyclist. Always look before starting your turn.
8. Make the turn, staying in the proper lane. Yield the right-of-way to any vehicle coming from the opposite direction.
9. Finish your turn in the proper lane. A right turn should be from the right lane into the right lane of the roadway entered. A left turn may be completed in any lane lawfully available, or safe, for the desired direction of travel.

## STOP SIGNS

At boulevard stops, yield the right-of-way to all other traffic and pedestrians before proceeding to cross a street or to turn onto a street. Move forward only when the road is clear.

At a four-way-stop intersection, the driver of the first vehicle to stop at the intersection should be the first to proceed. If two or more vehicles reach the four-way-stop intersection at the same time, the driver of the vehicle on the left shall yield the right-of-way to the vehicle on the right.

## OPEN INTERSECTIONS

An open intersection is one without traffic control signs or signals. When you enter one, you must yield the right-of-way if:

- A vehicle is already in the intersection.
- You enter or cross a state highway from a secondary road.
- You enter a paved road from an unpaved road.
- You plan to make a left turn and a vehicle is approaching from the opposite direction.

When two cars enter an open intersection at the same time, the driver on the left must yield to the driver on the right.

## TRAFFIC CRASHES: WHAT ARE YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES?

1. **STOP.** If you are in a crash while driving, you must stop. If anyone is hurt, you must get help. You must also be ready to give your name, address and vehicle registration number as well as show your driver license to others involved in the crash.
2. **REPORT THE CRASH.** If the crash causes injury, death or property damage, it must be reported. Call the local police, the Florida Highway Patrol or the county Sheriff's Office. If the crash involves a charge of driving under the influence (DUI) or results in death, injury or property damage to the extent a wrecker must tow a vehicle away, the officer will fill out a report. If the crash is investigated by an officer, you, the driver, need not make a written report. The officer will provide you with a copy of the form for your records. If property damage appears to be over \$500 and no report is written by an officer, you must make a written report of the crash to the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles within five days.
3. **MOVE YOUR CAR IF IT IS BLOCKING TRAFFIC.** If your car is blocking the flow of traffic, you must move it. If you cannot move it yourself, you must get help or call a tow truck. This is true anytime your vehicle is blocking the flow of traffic, whether it has been involved in a crash or not.
4. **APPEAR IN COURT.** If you are charged in a driving crash, you may have to go to court. The officer who comes to the scene of the crash will file charges against any driver who violated a traffic law. Anyone who is charged will have a chance to explain to the court what happened. The court will then decide what the penalty will be. Anyone who is not charged with violating the law may have to come to court as a witness.

A driver convicted of leaving the scene of a crash involving death or personal injury will have his or her license revoked. The driver is also subject to criminal penalties.

## CRASH INVOLVING AN UNATTENDED VEHICLE

If, while driving, you hit a vehicle with no one in it or if you damage any object that belongs to someone else, you must tell the owner. Give the owner your name, address and tag number in person or in a note attached to the object that was hit. Report the crash immediately to the proper law enforcement agency.

## AVOIDING REAR-END COLLISIONS

Many crashes happen because one vehicle runs into the back of another one. Here are some things you can do to lower the risk of someone running into the rear of your vehicle.

- Check your brake lights often to make sure they are clean and working properly, if your golf cart is so equipped.
- Know what is going on behind you. Use your rearview mirror.
- Signal well in advance for turns, stops and lane changes.
- Slow down gradually. Avoid any sudden actions.
- Drive with the flow of traffic (within the speed limit). Driving too slowly can be as dangerous as driving too fast.
- Adjust your speed to traffic conditions on streets and in parking lots.



## TRAFFIC CONTROL SIGNALS

Traffic signals are placed at intersections to keep traffic moving and avoid accidents. Drivers, pedestrians and bicycle riders must obey these signals except when an officer is directing traffic. Stop on the stop line if your golf cart is nearest the signal. Some signals change only when a car is at the stop line. If traffic signals are out of order, stop as you would for a four-way stop sign.

The **RED** light requires a complete stop at the marked stop line. If there is no marked stop line, stop before entering the crosswalk on the near side of the intersection. Wait until the signal changes to green before you proceed.

At the three State Road 674 crossings, you are permitted to go straight across. You are not permitted to turn left or right onto the roadway.

The **YELLOW** light warns that the signal is changing from green to red. Stop if you can. When the red light appears, you are prohibited from entering the intersection.

Don't try to beat a traffic light with a golf cart. They usually have inadequate acceleration and are unable to speed out of harm's way.

The **GREEN** light means you may proceed if it is safe to do so. You must first, however, yield the right-of-way to pedestrians and vehicles that are still within the intersection.

## DRIVEWAYS

Driveways form an intersection with sidewalks. All motorists must yield to bicyclists and pedestrians utilizing the sidewalk.

## EMERGENCY VEHICLES

Pedestrians and drivers must yield the right-of-way to law-enforcement cars, fire engines and other emergency vehicles using sirens and/or flashing lights. Pull over to the closest edge of the roadway right away and stop until the emergency vehicle has passed. Do not block intersections.

## BACKING UP

In an automobile, signal lights are provided which illuminate automatically to show that the car is in reverse gear. Few golf carts have this feature, although some are equipped with an audible sound signal that warns that the golf cart has been switched to Reverse. However, where the automobile reverse gear provides a low speed, the golf cart is able to proceed at its full speed even in reverse.

In backing up:

1. Look first to see that you will not interfere with traffic flow or endanger pedestrians. Special care should be used when backing out of busy parking areas.
2. Switch to Reverse before depressing the accelerator pedal. This should turn on an audible warning noise in a properly equipped and maintained golf cart.
3. Proceed slowly backward, continuing to be watchful.
4. Move into a position parallel with the nearest traffic lane before moving forward.

## WHERE YOU MUST STOP

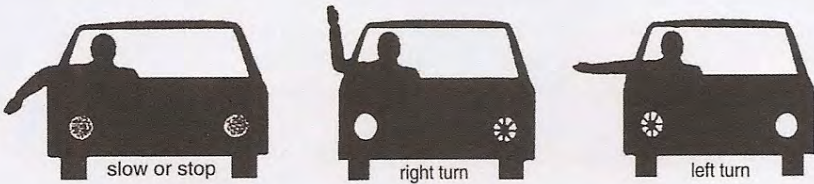
More accidents occur at intersections than any other place. You should exercise extreme caution when approaching any cross street or road.

## TURN SIGNALS AND EMERGENCY SIGNALS

You must use hand signals or directional signals to show that you are about to turn.

It is against the law to use your directional signals to tell drivers behind you that they can pass.

Four-way emergency flashers should only be used while your vehicle is legally stopped or disabled on the highway or shoulder of the highway.



## TRAFFIC LANES

The center lane of a three-lane highway is used only for turning left. Always drive on the right side of a two-lane highway except when passing.

If the road has four or more lanes with two-way traffic, drive in the right lane except when overtaking and passing, when preparing to turn left, or when directed to do otherwise by an officer or posted signs.

If you see red reflectors facing you on a lane line, you are on the wrong side of the road. Get into the proper lane immediately to avoid a head-on collision. If you see red reflectors facing you on pavement edge lines, you are going the wrong way on a one-way ramp. Pull off the pavement immediately to avoid a head-on collision.

The streets of Sun City Center seldom bear lane markings, and it is incumbent upon drivers of golf carts and autos to visualize street divisions that provide safe widths for passing.

Always drive on the right side of the street except in those rare cases when you might be passing a bicyclist or a parked car. A golf cart, being a slow vehicle, must stay in the right lane unless passing or turning left.

## VEHICLE MAINTENANCE

Regardless of how well you drive, you are not safe unless your golf cart is in good operating condition. You should regularly check for safe operation of brakes, lights (if so equipped), steering, turn signals (if you intend to use them) and tires.

You should also make sure your batteries are charged to good operating levels.

A faulty symptom such as a loose-holding brake, wheel wobble or unstable steering should prompt the immediate attention of a mechanic.



## BLIND SPOTS

Blind spots are areas near the left and right rear corners of your vehicle that you cannot see in your rearview mirror. Before you move sideways to change lanes on an expressway or to pass on any road, turn your head to make sure these areas are clear.

Required signals may be given by hand and arm or by signal lamps or devices. Most golf carts are not equipped with electric turn indicators; hence, drivers must use arm signals. When doing so, the arm should be fully extended and the driver should check visually to make sure his signal is observed.

Enclosing a cart in curtains to protect against inclement weather does not relieve the operator from the responsibility of proper signaling.

## PASSENGER SAFETY TIPS

Passengers and drivers should always keep their feet inside the golf cart while it is in motion.

Moreover, passengers should have both feet planted firmly on the floor while the golf cart is moving.

For extra stability, a passenger should sit with his or her right hip against the right arm of the seat.

A passenger should be aware of traffic conditions. A sharp, unexpected turn can throw a rider from the golf cart with serious consequences.

On turns and fast straight-aways, the passenger should grasp with his hand the right arm of the seat.

## SPEEDING

Golf carts are not known for their racing qualities. Electric golf carts, with their fixed battery and electric motor combination, seldom can reach more than about 12 miles per hour. Over smooth and level roadways, progress at this speed can seem agonizingly slow. So a contest develops to boost speed with lower gear ratios, altered motor field strength and higher horsepower ratings to get the golf carts to go faster.

The result has been the achievement of speeds over 25 miles per hour.

Such speeds are well below the limits set for automobile operation. The danger for golf cart users is due to the less safe features of golf cart design:

- No restraint system for passengers. No seat belts, no metal shell surrounding the passenger and little to hold on to.
- High turn angle.
- Lower braking friction.
- Higher center of gravity relative to golf cart width.

All of the above put golf cart riders at significant risk, especially at brisk speeds. At 24 miles per hour, the momentum of the human body is four times the force experienced at 12 miles per hour. Even at 6 miles per hour, the cart passenger has difficulty staying in the cart in an abrupt left turn. A collision at 24 miles per hour would be like dropping from a second-story window.

Golf carts going fast are also at the mercy of uneven pavements and could be thrown against a parked or passing car.

Adding to occupant danger at any speed is the tendency to leave a leg or foot outside of the cart while it is in motion. Many serious injuries are reported from unexpectedly catching on the ground or a stationary object.

## NIGHT DRIVING

Florida state law does not authorize the use of public roadways by golf carts at night, even if the golf cart is equipped with both headlights and taillights. Operation of golf carts in Sun City Center between sunset and sunrise is a violation of Florida Statute 316.212.

Violators can be given a citation for all violations by a law enforcement officer, which may result in your having to appear in court and paying a fine.

Again, golf carts are not allowed on the streets of Sun City Center at night. Operation at night is a violation of Florida state law.

## DRIVING TIPS AS WE AGE

(from the Florida Driver's Handbook)

Most older drivers enjoy the use of their golf carts and they handle them with skill. There is no reason they should not continue to drive as long as they are in good health and keep up to date with the Florida traffic laws. The passing years, unfortunately, take their toll so gradually that we ourselves are not aware of the change.

Deterioration of vision, hearing or reaction develops almost unnoticed until we find ourselves faced with an emergency that we are no longer equipped to handle. The result is an accident that the driver could easily have averted a few years, or even months, earlier.

Frequently reported errors made by older drivers include inattention, failure to drive in the proper lane and failure to signal or to observe STOP signs and signals.

Get your doctor's frank advice about driving.

## DRIVING IS A FULL-TIME JOB

Concentration is one of the most important elements of safe driving. The driver's seat is no place for daydreaming, mental napping, window shopping, scenic viewing or distracting conversation. Nor is it a place for a person who is ill, worried, angry or in grief. Driving is a full-time job. There have been too many accidents after which the driver (if he or she survived) said, "I don't know what happened." (From the Florida Driver's Handbook.)

## DRIVING IS A PRIVILEGE

The State of Florida considers the operation of a motor vehicle a privilege — not a right — which one must earn by proving that he or she is a good driver. One must not abuse the privilege or else risk losing it.

The extension by the state to operation of golf carts away from the golf course is likewise a privilege, and golf cart users of Sun City Center are challenged to show state legislators that the privilege is deserved.