



# **City of St. Pete Beach Golf Cart Operator's Manual**

**St. Pete Beach, Florida  
November 2013**

# **Golf Cart Operation**

## **Ordinance 2013-17**

### **Effective November 1, 2013**

The City Commission adopted Ordinance 2013-17 on September 18, 2013, to allow the operation of golf carts upon designated streets in the City of St. Pete Beach. This ordinance is provided in full in the contents of this Operator's Manual.

The City of St. Pete Beach is responsible for the annual registration of resident-owned golf carts. A decal will be issued to be displayed on each registered golf cart. This registration and decal must be current at all times the golf cart is operated on City streets.

Violations of Ordinance 2013-17 shall be enforced by a law enforcement officer or City code enforcement officer as such officer's legal authority and jurisdiction allows.

# Table of Contents

## Table of Contents

Golf Cart Operation .....	1
Table of Contents .....	2
1. INTRODUCTION .....	3
GOLF CART SAFETY.....	3
DISCLAIMER.....	3
DRIVING IS A PRIVILEGE.....	4
2. GOLF CART OPERATION FOR GENERAL TRANSPORT IN ST. PETE BEACH.....	4
A. CONDITIONS FOR GOLF CART OPERATION.....	4
B. GOLF CART OPERATING ZONES .....	5
C. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS .....	7
Auto vs. Golf Cart .....	7
Supreme Court Decision .....	7
Rules of Traffic.....	7
Traffic Lanes.....	8
Making Turns .....	8
Blind Spots .....	8
Backing Up .....	9
Night Driving.....	9
Stop Signs .....	9
Speeding.....	9
Children Drivers.....	10
Passenger Safety Tips .....	10
Pedestrians and Bicyclists.....	10
Traffic Crashes: What Are Your Responsibilities? .....	10
Crash Involving an Unattended Vehicle .....	11
Avoiding Rear-End Collisions .....	11

# **1. INTRODUCTION**

The freedom to use golf carts on City streets is a lifestyle benefit many Florida residents enjoy. When golf cart drivers share the public roads with automobiles, trucks, buses, bicycles and pedestrians, a high degree of care and knowledge in the operation of golf carts is essential. This Golf Cart Operator's Manual 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.

The City of St. Pete Beach provides this material to assist you with the State and City rules applicable to the use of golf carts on City streets.

- Please read this information carefully
- Please drive with caution
- Please be careful
- Please obey all traffic laws

## **GOLF CART SAFETY**

This Golf Cart Operator's Manual is intended to encourage the safe operation of golf carts for general transport in the City of St. Pete Beach and in consonance with City Ordinance No. 2013-17 and Florida Law

316.212. This manual outlines the basic expectations of golf cart safety. With this intent, the City shall promote safe golf cart operations with reliance on the following:

1. Golf cart operators shall be duly licensed to operate registered golf carts (must possess driver license);
2. Golf carts shall be subject to an annual registration by the City of St. Pete Beach Planning & Development Department;
3. The City shall develop and distribute appropriate literature advising safe operation of golf carts; and
4. The City shall coordinate and encourage safe golf cart operation on approved City streets and across permitted County and State roadways.

## **DISCLAIMER**

This Golf Cart Operator's Manual addresses the requirements of City Ordinance No. 2013-17 and Florida Law. It offers safety advice not covered in the laws. However, this Manual should not be considered a legal reference and should not be considered a legal reference. The Golf Cart Operator's Manual may be periodically revised and redistributed at the time of annual registration renewal. Just as safe golf cart operation is the sole responsibility of the golf cart owner/operator, the golf cart owner/operator is solely responsible for knowing and complying with all pertinent rules and regulations on the use of golf carts in the City of St. Pete Beach.

## **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 demonstrating that he or she is a good driver and be recognized in that regard by issuance of a driver's license. One must not abuse the privilege or else risk losing it. The extension by the State to the operation of golf carts away from the golf course is likewise a privilege, and golf cart users in the City of St. Pete Beach are challenged to protect that privilege and to avoid concerns that might result in the loss of this privilege.

## **2. GOLF CART OPERATION FOR GENERAL TRANSPORT IN ST. PETE BEACH**

### **A. CONDITIONS FOR GOLF CART OPERATION**

For general transport purposes on City of St. Pete Beach streets, in addition to the requirements of State and County laws, as well as common sense, the following conditions apply:

1. Golf cart operators must carry a valid Driver's License issued by the State of Florida or similar responsible governmental agency.
2. Golf carts operated on City streets must be registered with the City for such operation. Registration with the City would be made by application to the Community Development Department, 155 Corey Avenue, St. Pete Beach, between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. The Permit Application would require the following supporting information:
  - Proof of vehicle ownership (bill of sale or affidavit of ownership)
  - Proof that the vehicle owner has a valid Driver's License
  - Signed owner affidavit of liability insurance coverage either as a rider on a homeowner's policy or a separate vehicle policy.
  - Signed owner affidavit that the vehicle has the following, operable equipment for dawn to dusk operation: efficient brakes, reliable steering, a horn, safe tires, a rearview mirror and red reflectorized warning devices in the front and rear. For vehicles to be used for dusk to dawn operation there must be the following operable equipment: headlights, brake lights, turn signals and a windshield.
  - Owners of existing golf carts that are not equipped as described above shall be required to modify their golf carts prior to registration for operation on City streets.
  - Payment of annual registration fee.
  - Golf carts registered for general transport in the City will be identified by a decal to be mounted in an obvious place on a rear fender.
3. Golf carts shall be restricted to operation on City streets that are specifically designated for golf cart operation.
4. The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and Pinellas County policies for golf cart operation is restricted to the crossing of State and County roads only where the intersecting roads are designated for golf carts and the crossing is specifically approved and signed by the appropriate agency. At this time there are no permitted crossings of either a State or County Road.

5. Florida Statute 316.212: Operation of golf carts on certain roadways, was recently amended to allow municipalities the ability to designate sidewalks for golf cart operation. The amendment resulted from a concern to protect golf cart operators from standard vehicular traffic. With this amendment, the City Commission may choose to designate sidewalks for golf cart operation. Such a choice would be conditioned on a maximum golf cart speed of 15 MPH and a minimum sidewalk width of at least eight (8) feet wide, and that the sidewalk was outfitted with appropriate signage. There are presently no sidewalks in the City that qualify for such designation.
6. The City of St. Pete Beach recognizes that there is an added cost to equip a standard golf cart with the equipment discussed in paragraph 2. The City recognizes that there may be added costs and occasional inconvenience related to the other conditions discussed in paragraphs 1, 2, 3, and 4. However, the added cost and inconvenience to a golf cart operator seeking the privilege of operating a golf cart on City streets is reasonable for protecting the interests of other drivers and pedestrians in and on those same streets.
7. Golf cart owners might mistakenly believe their homeowners insurance covers them in event of any accidental occurrence with their golf cart. Such coverage is generally only in force for "a golf cart owned by insured operator when using for golfing purposes". Use of a golf cart for general transport purposes, including shopping, doctor's appointments, banking and such, will usually necessitate a separate golf cart insurance policy for coverage. The absence of such coverage exposes the owner/operator to personal liability for property damage and bodily injury to others. Some insurance companies will write attachments to your homeowner's policy for an additional fee, but most will not, which will make it necessary that you purchase a separate policy for this needed protection. This should provide coverage for liability, property damage, and comprehensive coverage for damage to your own golf cart. Local providers of golf cart insurance (which do not require other coverage) can be found in telephone directories and websites.

## **B. GOLF CART OPERATING ZONES**

At this time, golf carts can only be driven on city roads. No crossing of or operation on state or county roads is allowed.

## **THE CITY OF ST. PETE BEACH AND FLORIDA LAW**

Florida State laws provide that "A golf cart may be operated only upon... a municipal street that has been designated by a municipality for use by golf carts. (Florida Statute 316.212 & 316.2125). Prior to making such designation, the responsible local governmental entity must first determine that golf carts may safely travel on or across the public road or street, considering factors including speed, volume, and character of motor vehicle traffic using the road or street." The City of St. Pete Beach, Ordinance No. 2013-17 provides for golf cart operation on and across certain roads and streets pursuant to Florida Law. In addition, under State law, golf carts are not required to be registered with the Division of Motor Vehicles or carry a license plate. Specific elements of Florida Law and their application in the City of St. Pete Beach are summarized as follows:

1. MOTOR VEHICLE: An automobile, motorcycle, truck, trailer, semi-trailer, truck tractor and semi-trailer 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, but the term does not include traction engines, road rollers, 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. A golf cart may be operated on municipal streets that have been designated for such operation by the local municipality. The City of St. Pete Beach, Ordinance No. 2013-17 does allow operation on certain of its streets:
  - a. Golf carts may only be operated on roads that have a posted speed limit of 35 miles per hour or less.
  - b. Under Florida Law, a golf cart may not be operated on designated public roads or streets by any person under the age of 14. However, in St. Pete Beach, only licensed drivers are allowed to operate golf carts on City streets.
  - c. Under Florida Law, a municipality could allow golf carts to be driven on sidewalk that are at least eight (8) feet in width. However, in St. Pete Beach, there has not yet been such a designation.
  - d. Under Florida Law, golf carts may be operated only during the hours between sunrise and sunset unless the local municipality has specifically approved their nighttime operation and the golf carts are equipped with headlights, brake lights, turn signals, and a windshield. The City of St. Pete Beach Ordinance No. 2013-17 allows nighttime operation of properly-equipped golf carts.
  - e. A golf cart must be equipped with efficient brakes, reliable steering apparatus, safe tires, a rearview mirror, horn, and red reflectorized warning devices in both front and rear. The City of St. Pete Beach requires that golf carts operated on City streets be specifically equipped for such operation.
  - f. Golf carts are not permitted to drive on State or County roads except in such locations as are specifically permitted for purposes of crossing such roads. In addition, golf carts are not permitted to operate on City of St. Pete Beach streets which have posted speed limits higher than 35 miles per hour or which have excessive traffic. There are currently no permitted locations for golf carts to cross State or County road
3. LOW SPEED VEHICLE: 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.
  - a. Low speed vehicles may be operated on roads that have a posted speed limit of 35 miles per hour or less.
  - b. 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.
  - c. A Low Speed Vehicle must be registered and insured in accordance with Florida Statute 320.02.
  - d. Any person operating a low speed vehicle must have in his or her possession a valid driver's license.
  - e. A Low Speed Vehicle must be equipped with head lamps, stop lamps, tail lamps, reflex

reflectors, parking brakes, rearview mirrors, windshield, seat belts, and vehicle identification numbers.

The use of Low Speed Vehicles, rather than golf carts, for general transport is encouraged within the City of St. Pete Beach

### **C. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**



VS



#### **Auto vs. Golf Cart**

A golf cart can be similar to 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 gearboxes. New golf carts steer like autos, and passengers ride sitting down on cushioned seats. They can attain reasonable speed and carry useful loads.

However, 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. Passenger protection on common golf carts is very limited with 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 wheels around our streets.

#### **Supreme Court Decision**

On December 20, 1984, the Florida Supreme Court held 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 motor vehicle, when he entrusts it to someone who negligently operates it, applies to golf carts".

#### **Rules of Traffic**

The Florida Driver's Handbook rules apply to both automobile and golf cart operators.

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

## **Traffic Lanes**

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.



## **Making Turns**

You must use hand signals or directional signals to show that you are about to turn. 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 (9) steps in making a good turn: Make up your mind about your turn before you get to the turning point. Never make "last-minute" turns.

1. 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.
2. Move into the correct lane as you near the intersection. The correct lane for the 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 centerline.
3. 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.
4. Slow down to a safe turning speed.
5. When you are slowing to make a right turn, the bicyclist you passed may be catching up to you. Search over your shoulder before turning. Yield to bicyclists and pedestrians.
6. When turning left, you may be crossing the path of a pedestrian or bicyclist. Always search before starting your turn.
7. Make the turn, staying in the proper lane. Yield the right-of-way to any vehicle coming from the opposite direction.
8. 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.

## **Blind Spots**

Blind spots are areas near the left and right rear corners of your vehicle that you cannot see in your rearview mirrors. 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. 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 against inclement weather does not relieve the operator from the responsibility of proper signaling.

## **Backing Up**

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 backwards, continuing to be watchful.
4. Move into a position parallel with the nearest traffic lane before moving forward.

## **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. However, City Ordinance No. 2013-17 does allow nighttime operation of golf carts on City streets with proper equipment.

## **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.

## **Stop Signs**

Please 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.

## **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 twelve (12) miles per hour. Over smooth and level roadways, progress at this speed can seem agonizingly slow. So, some golf cart owners may attempt 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 twenty-five (25) miles per hour. However, per the Florida Statutes and St. Pete Beach Ordinance, the maximum allowable golf cart speed is twenty (20 mph).

Such speeds are well below the limits set for automobile operation. The danger for golf cart users is fewer golf cart safety features:

1. No restraint system for passengers
2. No metal shell surrounding passenger and little to hold on
3. High turn angle
4. Lower braking friction
5. 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.

## **Children Drivers**

Children are not allowed to drive golf carts on City of St. Pete Beach streets even when accompanied by an adult.

## **Passenger Safety Tips**

Passengers and drivers should always keep their feet inside the golf cart while it is in motion. There is a 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. 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 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-ways, the passenger should grasp with his hand the right arm of the seat.

## **Pedestrians and Bicyclists**

It is the driver's responsibility to do everything possible to avoid colliding with any pedestrians, bicyclist or other person. All motorists must yield to bicyclists and pedestrians utilizing the sidewalk. 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.



## **Traffic Crashes: What Are Your Responsibilities?**

**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 driver license. 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.

**Report the crash.** If the crash causes injury, death or property damage, it must be reported. Call the Pinellas 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 (5) days.

**Move your vehicle if it is blocking traffic.** If your vehicle 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.

**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.

### **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 and address 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.

1. Know what is going on behind you. Use your rearview mirrors.
2. Signal well in advance for turns, stops and lane changes.
3. Slow down gradually. Avoid any sudden actions.
4. Drive with the flow of traffic (within the speed limit).
5. Adjust your speed to traffic conditions on streets and parking lots.