

## MOTOR SCOOTERS NOT STREET LEGAL

**HARRISBURG:** With motor scooters most likely on many children's Holiday Wish Lists, state Department of Transportation cautioned that their use on Pennsylvania roadways and public sidewalks is illegal and strictly prohibited.

"While motor scooters have become a popular form of transportation over the past several years with children and teens, their use on public roads and sidewalks can be dangerous, and they are illegal," said Betty L. Serian, Deputy Secretary for Safety Administration at PennDOT. "Parents should consider the safety and restricted use of these vehicles before purchasing."

Although many models exist in today's market, typically a motor scooter is a two tandem-wheeled (one in front of the other) vehicle powered by an engine (gasoline or electric) and may or may not have a seat or saddle for the driver. The term motor scooter includes small motorcycles, mini-bikes, mini-cycles and the more recent "pocket bikes" and "pocket rockets," as well as motorized standing scooters.

"While it's legal for foot-powered, non-motorized scooters to be used on sidewalks, electric or gas motor-powered versions can only be ridden on private property," said Serian.

Under the Pennsylvania Vehicle Code, motor scooters are classified as motor vehicles. To be legally operated on the road, a motor scooter is required to be registered, inspected and insured. However, many scooters do not have the equipment requirements needed to pass inspection. Unlike a conventional motor vehicle, motor scooters are unenclosed vehicles that expose the operator to the risk of an immediate, unprotected impact with other motor vehicles and pedestrians, without the benefit of safety equipment such as fenders, turn signals, lights or tires suitable for highway use. Moreover, many of the motor scooters are not certified to meet Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards, minimum federal equipment standards required for all new vehicles, which are manufactured for use on the roadways.

"The lack of safety equipment, coupled with the fact that many motor scooters are so small they cannot be seen by other drivers, poses a hazard to the scooter drivers and other motorists," Serian said. "Some scooters stand only 18 inches high or less."

In addition to the registration, inspection, equipment and insurance requirements, scooters may not be operated by unlicensed drivers if driven on highways or public sidewalks. Scooters are commonly purchased for use by children and teens, most of whom do not possess a driver's license.

A common misconception is that scooters that have an engine with less than five brake horsepower do not fall under regulation. All scooters, regardless of horsepower, are regulated. Brake horsepower, a measure of power at the point of delivery, is used to define the power of scooters and mopeds.

There are a few motor scooters, however, manufactured for highway use. These scooters have a certification label on them, which certifies that they meet federal equipment standards. A 17-digit vehicle identification number is also affixed on these scooters by the manufacturer, transferable to the purchaser with either a manufacturer's certificate of ownership or a title. These scooters conform to federal and state vehicle equipment requirements and standards and, when properly registered, inspected and insured, may be operated on the highway by a licensed driver.