

Indiana scooter drivers facing new regulations

BY: Associated Press

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INDIANAPOLIS - State officials are warning motor scooter drivers that starting in January they'll need license plates on those bikes.

Legislators this year approved Indiana's first license requirements for scooters following complaints from police and others about a growing number of unsafe scooter drivers.

Under the new law, drivers of scooters with engines of 50 cubic centimeters or less will need to buy license plates and pass a Bureau of Motor Vehicles test involving road signals and signs. Operators of scooters with larger engines will be required to follow motorcycle requirements, including holding a valid driver's license with a motorcycle endorsement or valid motorcycle learner's permit.

BMV officials released an online video Wednesday explaining which documents are needed to obtain a scooter license and the different types of licenses needed.

Michael Tockey, owner of Speed City Cycle in Indianapolis, said the smaller-engine scooters cost \$500 and aren't built to go faster than 35 mph but can be modified to go as fast as 60 mph. He said he sells about 100 of those a year and would support tougher regulations.

"We have people who aren't allowed to drive a car but are out there driving these cheap, unregistered bikes without insurance and without licenses," he said. "I call them disposable bikes because the drivers get in accidents, leave the bikes and walk away from them."

The BMV isn't sure how many scooters are on the road in Indiana and how many drivers might seek licenses, agency spokesman Josh Gillespie said.

"We just know we will be prepared for their arrival once they do come, and we'll try to make sure all the branches are adequately staffed to handle the influx of new customers," Gillespie said.

It will be up to police departments to decide how quickly to start enforcing the license requirements, he said.

Evansville police officials told a legislative committee that scooters had often been used in crimes such as robberies, but that the owners couldn't be found because they lacked any registration. Assistant Police Chief Chris Pugh said its officers would start "aggressively enforcing" the new scooter laws by issuing tickets starting Jan. 12.

Law sponsor Rep. Dave Wolkins, R-Winona Lake, said not requiring a driver's license for scooter operators was important because he felt it was necessary that those with drunken driving convictions still have a way to get to work.

The new law doesn't require insurance for drivers of the smaller scooters, with the registration costing \$26.35, plus a \$10 excise tax.

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