

Maine Regulations for Registering Imported Cars

Maine has specific and evolving regulations for registering imported vehicles, especially those not originally manufactured for the U.S. market. The rules are particularly strict for vehicles that do not meet federal safety and emissions standards.

Key Points:

- **Federal Compliance Required:** Maine only registers imported vehicles that were manufactured to meet U.S. Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (FMVSS) and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) emissions requirements. Vehicles lacking this compliance are not eligible for registration, with exceptions for certain antique vehicles and limited-use golf carts.
- **Definition of Off-Road Vehicles:** As of June 2021, Maine law defines an "off-road vehicle" as any motor vehicle that, due to its design, configuration, original manufacture, or intended use, does not meet FMVSS, EPA emissions requirements, or National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) crash testing standards. Such vehicles cannot be registered for on-road use, unless they are mopeds or motorcycles.
- **Impact on Imported Vehicles:** This broad definition means that many imported vehicles-especially Japanese Domestic Market (JDM) kei trucks, Mitsubishi Delicas, and other right-hand-drive or non-U.S.-spec models-are considered off-road vehicles and are not eligible for registration, even if they are over 25 years old and were legally imported under federal rules.
- **Registration Cancellations:** Maine has actively canceled registrations for imported vehicles that do not meet federal standards. Owners have received letters from the Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV) notifying them of the revocation, citing the relevant statute.
- **Antique Vehicle Exception:** Vehicles classified as antiques (typically 25 years or older) that were manufactured to the standards of their time may be

registered, but their use is restricted to limited circumstances such as exhibitions or parades.

- **Pending Legislation:** There is ongoing legislative activity (such as bill LD 63) seeking to allow on-road registration for imported vehicles at least 25 years old, exempting them from federal safety and emissions standards. As of early 2023, this bill was still under consideration and had not yet changed the law.

Federal Import Requirements:

- Vehicles less than 25 years old must comply with all applicable FMVSS and EPA standards to be imported and registered in the U.S. Vehicles 25 years or older can be imported without meeting these standards, but state registration requirements still apply.
- Documentation required for import includes the bill of lading, bill of sale, foreign registration, EPA form 3520-1, and DOT form HS-7.

Summary Table: Import and Registration Requirements

Vehicle Age	Federal Import Eligibility	Maine Registration Eligibility
Under 25 years old	Must meet FMVSS & EPA standards	Only if meets FMVSS & EPA standards
25 years or older	Exempt from FMVSS & EPA for import	Must still meet FMVSS & EPA, unless antique with restricted use ^{[1][2][3]}

Conclusion

Currently, Maine will only register imported vehicles that were manufactured to comply with U.S. federal safety and emissions standards, with very limited exceptions. Most imported vehicles that do not meet these standards, including many JDM models, cannot be legally registered for road use in Maine. Legislative efforts to change this are ongoing, but as of now, the restrictions remain in place.

1. <https://www.jalopnik.com/maine-is-cancelling-the-registrations-of-imported-jdm-c-1847362315/>
2. <https://www.hagerty.com/media/news/maine-and-rhode-island-take-aim-at-jdm-cars-but-why/>
3. <https://delicaforum.com/index.php?threads%2Fmaine-canceling-delica-registration.3907%2Fpage-7>
4. <https://www.sema.org/news-media/enews/2023/03/maine-introduces-bill-allow-road-usage-imported-vehicles>
5. <https://www.cbp.gov/trade/basic-import-export/importing-car>