

From the Office of the Sheriff:

Last week I sent out a press release in response to numerous calls I received regarding fire works sales. The issue was why things that are illegal to use in Wisconsin can be sold in Wisconsin? I do not have a good answer to that question. This is not limited to fireworks, it applies to many things. Beyond fireworks, the next most popular articles sold that are illegal to use are after market auto parts. This includes things such as illegal lights, tinting for windows, headlight and license plate covers, and exhaust systems. The standard for vehicle equipment is found in Wisconsin Administrative Code Chapter Trans 305.

Trans 305 prescribes minimum equipment requirements for vehicles and standards for the equipment use on vehicles. Trans 305 does not apply to farm tractors/implements, road machinery, bicycles, mopeds, golf carts or vehicle drawn by horses. It does cover homemade or reconstructed vehicles registered after January 1, 1975.

I thought I would cover some of the most common violations of Trans 305. The first requirement forbids the operation of any vehicle that has its vehicle identification number (VIN) missing, altered or not attached. This includes homemade and replica vehicles. For those who have the hobby of building replica cars or homemade vehicles, they cannot be operated until they have been inspected by a certified inspector. Inspectors are usually employed by the Wisconsin State Patrol.

Trans 305.075 states that auxiliary lamps that are fog lights or adverse weather lamps may not be used in lieu of headlamps. The auxiliary lamps must be mounted below the level of the center of the headlight except when added to equipment such as snow plows and the equipment blocks the transmission of the light from the factory installed headlights. The auxiliary lamp must direct light forward. We have all seen cars that glow underneath, fluorescent lights inside and out, front and back - NO GOOD.

Any and all off-road lighting may not be lighted when operated or driven upon a highway. Back-up lamps are standard for those manufactured after Jan, 1, 1969 and must be maintained. Registration plate lamp must be maintained and working. This is an easy reason to stop you, ensure you have a working back-up lamp.

Every vehicle must have a bumper, front and rear. Replacement bumpers must be the same size, strength and surface area of the original. Bumpers shall be no more than 30" up from a level surface. No required bumper can be constructed of wood unless it is an additional to a legal metal bumper. How about those bald tires? You must have at least 2/32 inch of tread depth.

Trans 305 also covers standards for doors, hoods, and door handles, exhaust, horns, fuel systems, fenders and mirrors. This will also provide the standards for window tinting, which must permit at least 50% of visible light to pass through. Additional equipment clarification can be found in State Statute Chapter 347 Equipment of Vehicles. Use the web at www.wisconsin.gov.

Lastly, if you are provided two license plates both must be installed, one front and one rear. The manufacturer's failure to provide a license plate bracket for the front of your new Firebird is not a defense for failure to display license plate. Go to your local dealer and order the necessary bracket. Thanks for listening tnehls@co.dodge.wi.us.