



Side-by-Sides

Information accurate as of June 2026

Executive Summary

Side-by-sides (SxS), also known as Utility Terrain Vehicles (UTVs), are regulated differently across the 15 Southern states, with significant variation in how states classify, title, register, and authorize roadway use of these vehicles. While most Southern states require a title for at least some categories of SxS, registration requirements and roadway access vary considerably, ranging from broad prohibitions on public-road operation in states such as Mississippi and Virginia to more expansive frameworks allowing operation on designated roads in North Carolina, Oklahoma, and Tennessee. Several states authorize local governments to determine whether SxS may operate on certain roads, including Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, South Carolina, and West Virginia, resulting in a patchwork of local regulations within those states. Driver licensing requirements also vary, though most states that permit roadway operation require operators to possess a valid driver's license and comply with vehicle equipment, insurance, and safety standards.

Research Methods

Statutory review of side-by-side legislation in the Southern region.

Findings and Analysis

Sides-by-sides (SxS), also known as Utility Terrain Vehicles (UTV), are motorized off-road vehicles designed to travel on four or more non-highway tires, with a steering wheel, non-straddle seating, seat belts, an occupant protective structure, and engine displacement up to 1,000cc.^{1,2} SxS are distinct from other four-wheeled off-road vehicles (see Figure 1). Classification of SxS varies across Southern states.¹ States in the Southern region differ in their regulations for SxS, as detailed below. For a summary table of SxS regulations of states in the Southern region, please see Table 1.

¹ Examples include Off-Road Vehicles, Off-Highway Vehicles, Recreational Off-Highway Vehicles, Modified Utility Vehicles, Street-Legal Utility Vehicles, and Multipurpose Off-Highway Vehicles

Figure 1. Types of Four-Wheeled Off-Road Vehicles

	ATV	UTV
 ATV		 UTV
 Seating	1 to 2 riders straddle seats	2 to 6 riders sit inside
 Controls	Handlebars	Steering wheel
 Rollover Protection	No	Yes
 Size	Smaller	Larger
 Weight	Lighter	Heavier
 Hauling/Towing	Less capability	More capability
 Number of wheels	3, 4 or 6	4 or 6
 Affordability	Lower cost	Higher cost

Golf Cart	Low Speed Vehicle (LSV)
 ✗ Travels up to 18 mph ✗ No Mirrors ✗ Folding Windshield & No Wipers ✗ No VIN Number ✗ No Brake & Brake Lights ✗ No License Plate ✗ No Headlights ✗ No Turn Signals ✗ No Seat Belts ✗ Not Insured	 ✓ Travels from 20-25 mph ✓ Side Mirrors ✓ Full Windshield & Wipers ✓ Vin Number ✓ Parking Brake & Brake Lights ✓ Reflective Triangle ✓ License Plate with Sticker ✓ Headlights ✓ Turn Signals ✓ Seat Belts ✓ Insured

Source: Author's visualization using information from ATV/UTV sales companies^{3,4}

Southern State Profiles

Alabama

Alabama classifies SxS as *Off-Road Vehicles*.⁵ Beginning with model year 2026 vehicles, owners must obtain a certificate of title for off-road vehicles.⁶ Registration through the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency is voluntary rather than mandatory, and local governments may not impose separate licensing or registration requirements.^{7,8} State law does not provide broad authorization for off-road vehicle operation on public roads.⁹ However, limited exceptions exist under certain statutory provisions and local authorities.¹⁰

Arkansas

Arkansas classifies SxS as *Recreational Off-Highway Vehicles (ROV)*.¹¹ Arkansas requires both titling and registration of recreational off-highway vehicles through the Department of Finance and Administration.^{12,13} ROVs generally may not operate on public streets or highways. However, several statutory exceptions exist, including agricultural activities, hunting-related travel, direct roadway crossings, use by individuals with certain disabilities, and official governmental or utility-related functions.¹⁴ Operators using ROVs on public roads under authorized exceptions must maintain vehicle registration and insurance and possess a valid driver's license.¹⁵

Florida

Florida classifies SxS as *Off-Highway Vehicles (OHV)*.¹⁶ Florida requires titling of off-highway vehicles owned by residents and operated on public lands.¹⁷ The state does not impose a general registration requirement.¹⁸ Florida generally prohibits OHV operation on public roads; however, counties and municipalities may authorize OHV use on roads under



their jurisdiction, provided those roads have posted speed limits of 35 miles per hour or less.¹⁹ Florida law does not establish a specific driver's license requirement for OHV operation, although younger operators are subject to supervision and safety training requirements when operating on public lands.²⁰

Georgia

Georgia classifies SxS as *Multipurpose Off-Highway Vehicles (MPOHV)*.²¹ Georgia does not require titles for MPOHVs, but allows optional registration that permits operation on county roads.^{22,23} Eligible vehicles must meet statutory design, utility use, speed, size, and safety equipment requirements.²⁴ Operators must possess a valid driver's license to operate these vehicles on authorized roads legally.²⁵

Kentucky

Kentucky classifies SxS as *Off-Highway Vehicles (OHV)*.²⁶ Kentucky does not require titling or registration of OHVs because they are not classified as motor vehicles under state law.^{27,28} State law authorizes counties, cities, urban-county governments, and consolidated local governments to permit OHV operation on highways within their jurisdictions through local ordinances. However, OHVs remain prohibited on interstate highways.²⁹ Any operator using an OHV on public roads pursuant to local authorization must possess a valid driver's license.³⁰

Louisiana

Louisiana classifies SxS as *Utility Terrain Vehicles (UTV)*.³¹ Louisiana requires UTVs operated on designated parish roads or municipal streets to be both titled and registered through the Office of Motor Vehicles.^{32,33} UTV operation on public roads is generally prohibited unless a parish or municipality has specifically designated a roadway for UTV use and posted appropriate signage, such as UTVs crossing higher-speed roadways at intersections under certain conditions.³⁴ Operators must be at least 21 years old and hold a valid driver's license.³⁵

Mississippi

Mississippi classifies SxS as *All-Terrain Vehicles (ATV)*.³⁶ Beginning July 1, 2025, owners must obtain a certificate of title, although the state does not impose a statewide registration requirement.^{37,38} State law expressly states that the titling requirement does not authorize operation on public roads or highways.^{39,40} Individuals operating an ATV on public property must possess either a valid driver's license or an approved off-road vehicle safety certificate.⁴¹

Missouri

Missouri classifies SxS as *Recreational Off-Highway Vehicles (ROV)*.⁴² Missouri does not require either titling or registration for ROVs.^{43,44} State law generally prohibits ROV operation on public highways but provides several exceptions, including agricultural and industrial uses, operation near a primary residence, certain uses by individuals with disabilities, and operation authorized through local permits.⁴⁵ Cities and counties may issue permits allowing ROV operation on designated roads.⁴⁶ Operators using a ROV under one of these highway-use exceptions must possess a valid driver's or chauffeur's license.⁴⁷

North Carolina

North Carolina classifies SxS as *Modified Utility Vehicles*.⁴⁸ North Carolina authorizes the optional titling of modified utility vehicles.⁴⁹ Modified utility vehicles must be registered and insured before being operated on public roads.⁵⁰ State law allows operation on roads with posted speed limits of 55 miles per hour or less, provided the vehicle meets extensive equipment requirements, including lighting, mirrors, seat belts, and a speedometer.⁵¹ Since modified utility vehicles are authorized for highway use, operators generally must possess a valid driver's license.^{52,53}



Oklahoma

Oklahoma classifies SxS as *Street-Legal Utility Vehicles*.⁵⁴ Oklahoma requires both titling and registration of street-legal utility vehicles operated on public roads.^{55,56} These vehicles may operate on highways with posted speed limits of 50 miles per hour or less and must satisfy all statutory equipment requirements for street-legal operation.⁵⁷ Operators must be at least 16 years old and hold a valid Oklahoma driver's license.⁵⁸

South Carolina

Pursuant to enacted legislation scheduled to take effect November 18, 2026, South Carolina will classify SxS as *Utility Terrain Vehicles (UTV)*.⁵⁹ South Carolina will require UTVs operated on public highways to be titled, registered, insured, and equipped with a license plate.^{60,61} Registered UTVs may operate on certain highways with speed limits of 55 miles per hour or less, subject to local ordinances and geographic limitations.⁶² Local governments may further regulate the hours and locations of operation.⁶³ Operators must be at least 17 years old, possess a valid driver's license, and carry proof of registration and insurance while operating the vehicle.⁶⁴

Tennessee

Tennessee classifies SxS as *Class II Off-Highway Vehicles (OHV)*.⁶⁵ Tennessee exempts Class II OHVs from the state's off-highway vehicle titling requirements.⁶⁶ However, residents operating these vehicles must obtain an off-highway vehicle license plate.⁶⁷ OHVs may operate on state highways with speed limits of 45 miles per hour or less and on county roads unless prohibited by local authorities or the Tennessee Department of Transportation.⁶⁸ Operators must be at least 16 years old and possess a valid driver's license.⁶⁹

Texas

Texas classifies SxS as *Recreational Off-Highway Vehicles (ROV)*.⁷⁰ Texas requires titles for ROVs, but generally does not register off-highway vehicles for normal highway use.^{71,72} Instead, vehicles operating under authorized roadway exceptions must display an off-highway vehicle license plate.⁷³ State law permits limited roadway operation for agricultural work, utility service activities, travel within certain master-planned communities, access to golf courses, and on specified local roads with speed limits of 35 miles per hour or less.⁷⁴ Operators must hold a valid driver's license unless otherwise exempted by law.⁷⁵

Virginia

Virginia classifies SxS as *All-Terrain Vehicles (ATV)*.⁷⁶ Virginia requires titles for most new ATVs, but does not require registration.^{77,78} ATVs generally may not be operated on public highways or public property except in limited circumstances, such as roadway crossings, emergency response activities, or specific trail connections authorized in Buchanan and Tazewell counties.⁷⁹ Virginia does not require a driver's license to operate an ATV, but operators must comply with age restrictions and helmet requirements.⁸⁰

West Virginia

West Virginia classifies SxS as *Off-Highway Vehicles (OHV)*.⁸¹ West Virginia requires titling of OHVs, but exempts them from annual registration requirements.^{82,83} OHVs may not operate on interstate highways but may travel limited distances on roadway shoulders or near the right edge of certain roads to access trails, fields, lodging, or residences.⁸⁴ Counties and municipalities may also authorize operation on designated roads for events, emergencies, and other approved purposes.⁸⁵ A driver's license is generally not required for operation under these statutory provisions, although some exceptions apply for younger operators carrying passengers.⁸⁶



Table 1. 15-State Comparison Table - Side-by-Sides

State	Classification of SxS	Title Required	Registration Required	Public Road Use Allowed	Driver's License Required for Road Use
Alabama	Off-Road Vehicles	Yes	Voluntary	Local Ordinance Jurisdiction	No
Arkansas	Recreation Off-Highway Vehicle	Yes	Yes	No, unless under a statutory exception	Yes
Florida	Off-Highway Vehicles	Yes	No	Yes, if authorized by the local government	No
Georgia	Multipurpose Off-Highway Vehicles	No	Optional for county road use	Yes, if registered as MPOHV and authorized	Yes
Kentucky	Off-Highway Vehicles	No	No	Local Ordinance Jurisdiction	Yes
Louisiana	Utility Terrain Vehicles	Yes	Yes	Yes, on designated parish roads and municipal streets	Yes
Mississippi	All-Terrain Vehicles	Yes	No	No	Yes (or safety certificate on public property)
Missouri	Recreation Off-Highway Vehicle	No	No	Yes, under statutory exceptions and local permits	Yes
North Carolina	Modified Utility Vehicle	Optional	Yes	Yes (roads ≤ 55 mph)	Yes
Oklahoma	Street-Legal Utility Vehicle	Yes	Yes	Yes (roads ≤ 50 mph)	Yes
South Carolina	Utility Terrain Vehicles	Yes	Yes	Local Ordinance Jurisdiction	Yes
Tennessee	Off-Highway Vehicles (Class II)	No	Yes	Yes (roads ≤ 45 mph and county roads)	Yes
Texas	Recreation Off-Highway Vehicle	Yes	No (off-highway plate required for authorized highway use)	Yes, under statutory exceptions	Yes
Virginia	All-Terrain Vehicles	Yes	No	No	No
West Virginia	Off-Highway Vehicles	Yes	No	Yes, under statutory conditions and local authorization	No

¹ Recreational Off-Highway Vehicle Association. "What Is an ROV?" Accessed June 18, 2026. <https://rohva.org/what-is-an-rov/>.

² Recreational Off-Highway Vehicle Association. "ANSI Standards." Accessed June 18, 2026. <https://rohva.org/ansi-standard/>.

³ eBay Motors. "Differences Between ATVs and UTVs." *eBay Motors Blog*. Accessed June 18, 2026. <https://www.ebay.com/motors/blog/vehicles/differences-between-atvs-and-utvs>.



⁴ Rick Case E-Z-GO. "Golf Carts vs. Low-Speed Vehicles: What's the Difference?" Accessed June 18, 2026.

<https://www.rickcaseezgo.com/blog/golf-carts-vs-low-speed-vehicles-whats-the-difference--49194>.

⁵ Alabama Legislature. "§ 32-12A-1. Definitions." *Code of Alabama*. Accessed June 18, 2026.

<https://alison.legislature.state.al.us/code-of-alabama?section=32-12A-1>.

⁶ Alabama Legislature. "§ 32-8-30. Application for Certificate of Title." *Code of Alabama*. Accessed June 18, 2026.

<https://alison.legislature.state.al.us/code-of-alabama?section=32-8-30>.

⁷ Alabama Legislature. "§ 32-12A-2. Registration of All-Terrain Vehicles and Recreational Off-Highway Vehicles." *Code of Alabama*.

Accessed June 18, 2026. <https://alison.legislature.state.al.us/code-of-alabama?section=32-12A-2>.

⁸ Alabama Legislature. "§ 32-12A-9. Local Regulation Prohibited." *Code of Alabama*. Accessed June 18, 2026.

<https://alison.legislature.state.al.us/code-of-alabama?section=32-12A-9>.

⁹ Alabama Legislature, § 32-12A-1. *Definitions*, 2

¹⁰ *Ibid*.

¹¹ Arkansas General Assembly. "Arkansas Code § 27-21-102. Definitions." *Arkansas Code*. Accessed June 18, 2026.

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¹² Arkansas General Assembly. "Arkansas Code § 27-20-205. Registration Required." *Arkansas Code*. Accessed June 18, 2026.

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¹³ Arkansas General Assembly. "Arkansas Code § 27-20-202. Certificate of Title." *Arkansas Code*. Accessed June 18, 2026.

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¹⁴ Arkansas General Assembly. "Arkansas Code § 27-21-106. Operation on Public Streets and Highways Unlawful—Exceptions—

Definition." *Arkansas Code*. Accessed June 18, 2026. <https://advance.lexis.com/documentpage/?pdmfid=1000516&crd=4dfb67b0-e0ba-4f1b-a9f1-2c941263c6c6&nodeid=ABBAACAAJAAH&nodepath=%2FROOT%2FABB%2FABBAAC%2FABBAACAAJ%2FABBAACAAJAAH&level=4&haschildren=&populated=false&title=27-21-106.+Operation+on+public+streets+and+highways+unlawful+%E2%80%94+Exceptions+%E2%80%94+Definition.&config=00JAA2ZjZiM2VhNS0wNTVILTQ3NzUtYjQzYy0yYWZmODJiODRmMDYKAFBvZENhdGFsb2FxiYCNsel0pIlggpYkw9PK&pddocfullpath=%2Fshared%2Fdocument%2Fstatutes-legislation%2Furn%3AcontentItem%3A6804-KR50-R03M-C0B9-00008-00&ecomp=6gf5kkk&prid=7182d4f7-8475-45f3-b49d-43e003cc149b>.

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¹⁵ Arkansas General Assembly. "Arkansas Code § 27-21-107. Operation by Minors—Manner of Operation." *Arkansas Code*. Accessed June 18, 2026. <https://advance.lexis.com/documentpage/?pdmfid=1000516&crd=bcfe080a-0400-4b72-a427-449ba6642b7e&nodeid=ABBAACAAJAAI&nodepath=%2FROOT%2FABB%2FABBAAC%2FABBAACAAJ%2FABBAACAAJAAI&level=4&haschildren=&populated=false&title=27-21-107.+Operation+by+minors+%E2%80%94+Manner+of+operation.&config=00JAA2ZjZiM2VhNS0wNTVILTQ3NzUtYjQzYy0yYWZmODJiODRmMDYKAFBvZENhdGFsb2FxiYCNsel0pIlggpYkw9PK&pddocfullpath=%2Fshared%2Fdocument%2Fstatutes-legislation%2Furn%3AcontentItem%3A6G0D-RYK0-R03P-2146-00008-00&ecomp=6gf5kkk&prid=7182d4f7-8475-45f3-b49d-43e003cc149b>.

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¹⁶ Florida Legislature. "Florida Statutes § 317.0003. Off-Highway Vehicle Definitions." *Florida Statutes*. Accessed June 18, 2026.

https://www.leg.state.fl.us/Statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&URL=0300-0399/0317/Sections/0317.0003.html.



- ¹⁷ Florida Legislature. "Florida Statutes § 317.0006. Off-Highway Vehicle Titling Requirement." *Florida Statutes*. Accessed June 18, 2026. https://www.leg.state.fl.us/Statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=&URL=0300-0399/0317/Sections/0317.0006.html.
- ¹⁸ Florida Legislature, *Florida Statutes § 317.0003, 2*
- ¹⁹ Florida Legislature. "Florida Statutes § 316.2123. Operation of a Utility Vehicle on Certain Roadways." *Florida Statutes*. Accessed June 18, 2026. https://www.leg.state.fl.us/Statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&URL=0300-0399/0316/Sections/0316.2123.html.
- ²⁰ Florida Legislature. "Florida Statutes § 261.20. Operation of All-Terrain Vehicles and Off-Highway Vehicles on Public Lands." *Florida Statutes*. Accessed June 18, 2026. https://www.leg.state.fl.us/Statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&URL=0200-0299/0261/Sections/0261.20.html.
- ²¹ Georgia Secretary of State. "Georgia Administrative Code, Rule 560-10-23." *Georgia Administrative Code*. Accessed June 18, 2026. <https://rules.sos.ga.gov/gac/560-10-23>.
- ²² Georgia Department of Revenue. "Title Not Required or Optional Titles." Accessed June 18, 2026. <https://dor.georgia.gov/title-not-required-or-optional-titles>.
- ²³ Georgia Department of Revenue. "Registering a Multipurpose Off-Highway Vehicle." Accessed June 18, 2026. <https://dor.georgia.gov/registering-multipurpose-highway-vehicle>.
- ²⁴ Ibid.
- ²⁵ Ibid.
- ²⁶ Kentucky General Assembly. "Kentucky Revised Statutes § 189.281. Operation of Utility Terrain Vehicles on Highways by Local Authorization." *Kentucky Revised Statutes*. Accessed June 18, 2026. <https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/statutes/statute.aspx?id=54795>.
- ²⁷ Ibid.
- ²⁸ Ibid.
- ²⁹ Ibid.
- ³⁰ Ibid.
- ³¹ Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections, Office of Motor Vehicles. *Policy 122.01: Utility Terrain Vehicles (UTVs)*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana Office of Motor Vehicles. Accessed June 18, 2026. <https://public.powerdms.com/ladpsc/documents/371085>.
- ³² Ibid.
- ³³ Louisiana State Legislature. "La. Rev. Stat. § 32:299.3. Operation of Utility Terrain Vehicles on Public Roads and Streets." *Louisiana Laws*. Accessed June 18, 2026. <https://legis.la.gov/legis/Law.aspx?d=962467>.
- ³⁴ Ibid.
- ³⁵ Ibid.
- ³⁶ Mississippi Legislature. "Mississippi Code Annotated § 63-21-5. Definitions." *Mississippi Code of 1972*. Accessed June 18, 2026. <https://advance.lexis.com/documentpage/?pdmfid=1000516&crd=79417701-390b-4c27-be9e-8b504e4204aa&nodeid=ABHAAOABAAD&nodepath=%2FROOT%2FABH%2FABHAAO%2FABHAAOAB%2FABHAAOABAAD&level=4&haschildren=&populated=false&title=%C2%A7+63-21-5.+Definitions.&config=00JABhZDIzMTViZS04NjcxLTQ1MDItOTIiOS03MDg0ZTQxYzU4ZTQKAFBvZENhdGFsb2f8inKxYiqNVSiHJeNKRIUp&pddocfullpath=%2Fshared%2Fdocument%2Fstatutes-legislation%2Furn%3AcontentItem%3A6FCY-ST53-RRM6-0490-00008-00&eomp=6gf5kkk&prid=dfae44fb-89ef-4179-bab2-f3c4144c93d9>.
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