

All right, California dirttrack racers, it's time to get a bit serious for 5 minutes. The recent headache at Prairie City has brought into sharp focus a bike legality issue that has existed for years but is now something we all need to deal with.

California Vehicle Code section 38232, simply stated, requires a "transportation permit" if you are transporting a race-only vehicle over a public road. It's wrong, it's B.S., it's contrary to what most of us have thought for years (that if the vehicle never drives directly on the public roads that you don't need any paperwork), but it's the law. Fortunately, it's very easy to get.

Here's the application form: <http://www.dmv.ca.gov/forms/reg/reg712.pdf>

Print out the form and fill it out. It doesn't require a motor number and the application process doesn't require that anyone verify the frame VIN number that you list. There is also no requirement for any "paperwork" for the bike- you don't have to have a title, bill of sale or anything- just the application with a frame VIN listed and the \$18. You simply list the frame VIN and then take the form to a DMV office where you hand the happy State employee your form and \$18. You get in return a "California Motorcycle Transportation Permit" that apparently is so old that it lists it's price as "\$3", so you know how often DMV goes through those babies.

Now for some details-

I took 3 applications to DMV. The first was for my 2004 CRF450 that I have a Nevada title for but no California paperwork at all, the 2nd was for my 1984 XR250R for which I already have a complete California OHV title for (but which I've had non-opped since I bought it, as I never intended to ride it in a State park- it's my Junkyard bike) and the 3rd was for my Trackmaster XS650

Yamaha. The 2 Hondas, of course, already had factory-applied frame VINs. The Trackmaster had an 8-digit number that someone had stamped there long ago, so I wrote that number on the DMV application form. I took no titles or any other paperwork with me, just the 3 applications. I was a little worried that DMV wouldn't want to give me a transport permit on a bike that already had a DMV record (the XR250) but DMV's computer took all 3 bikes with no issues.

Now here are the situations that could be troublesome. What if you have, say, a stock-framed TT500 that you built from parts? You likely never even worried a bit about whether that bike might have been stolen in the distant past, as you were never going to bother with a legal title. If you list the frame VIN and the bike turns out to have been stolen and reported as stolen, you have a real problem. The lady who helped me at the San Andreas DMV didn't really know what they'd do then, but she said they'd certainly have to call over to the CHP office (right next door in San Andreas) and tell them that someone was trying to get a permit for a stolen bike. I also spoke with a pleasant young CHP officer a bit later and he hummed, hawed and basically said that if that did happen, they weren't letting you go until they had the stolen bike in their possession. Bad scene.

The same problem could occur with a race-framed bike that had been stolen, reported as stolen and that already has a frame VIN (my Red Hot frame has a short number on the frame, for example). If it's been stolen and reported as stolen, according to the CHP officer it's in a national database and will come up in the computer when you apply for a transport permit that lists that VIN. If that happens, plan on surrendering the bike.

If your race-framed bike doesn't have a number, the CHP still does the "assigned VIN sticker" deal with the little foil sticker that gets riveted to the frame. The CHP officer I spoke to advised me that San Andreas does that stuff on Thursdays and that you are requested to bring the complete bike with motor and whatever paperwork you have. They will confirm that there is

no VIN on the frame, run whatever motor number the crankcases have in the national database and as long as the motor was never stolen, they will place the "assigned VIN" sticker on the bike (he didn't know if they still insisted on drilling the frame and riveting or not). There is no charge for the CHP's work. You then fill that assigned VIN into the application form and DMV will sell you the transport sticker.

In summary, the permit is simple and easy if you've got a bike that already has a VIN and you are certain was never stolen. Fill in the form and take it and \$18 to DMV and they give you the permit. If your frame doesn't have a VIN, you could always just stamp some number on and use that on the application, but that would be illegal and thus you certainly wouldn't want to do that- better to call your nearest CHP and make the appointment for an assigned VIN sticker. If you have any question that your frame or crankcases that do have numbers may have been stolen in the past, then you have to make the difficult decision whether you want to gamble by using those numbers on the permit application or not.

Whatever you do, don't just ignore this issue. If your bike has a VIN and you get stopped, the least that's going to happen is the VIN will be run, the bike will not have been stolen and you'll get a no-permit ticket. If the bike is stolen, it will be impounded and you may go to jail. If there is no VIN and you get stopped, it's ticket time. It's a pain and it really is B.S. but the Pandora's Box has been opened and we can't put the genie back inside. Better just to suck up and deal with it!

Harvey Hesse, 7/1/11