

MCB BUTLER HANDBOOK 5100  
**Japanese Traffic Regulations**  
for  
**SOFA Licensed Drivers**



Compliments of the MCB Butler Installation Safety Office  
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# INTRODUCTION

1. Purpose. This handbook covers common elements of U.S. and Japanese traffic regulations and laws where applicable, for Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) sponsored U.S. Armed Forces personnel, government civilian employees, dependents and contractors while operating motor vehicles on mainland Japan and Okinawa.

## 2. General

a. The operation of privately owned vehicles (POV) within Japan is considered a privilege and has been coordinated between U.S. Forces Japan and the Japanese Provincial Government. Like all high-level agreements of this nature, adherence to local laws and regulations are critical to ensure the agreement remains in good standing. Personnel should be aware that driving is a privilege that can be revoked through formal Traffic Court adjudication, or simply through command administrative action based on the desires and needs of the commander.

b. The operation of a motor vehicle within Japan carries with it similar responsibilities (and consequences) as operating a motor vehicle in the U.S. with a few exceptions. A significant difference under Japanese law involves categorizing anyone with a motor vehicle operator's license as a "professional driver." While driving in the U.S. is more or less taken for granted these days for anyone 16 years of age or older, Japanese citizens must devote considerable time and money toward obtaining their license through a government approved professional driving school. As such, traffic accidents that result in personal injury or death frequently lead to criminal prosecution under Article 211 of the Japanese Penal Code, "*Injury or Death through Occupational or Professional Negligence*." In mishaps of this nature, drivers who are in the least bit negligent may be charged. Penalties can be both costly and severe as at-fault drivers will typically be subject to the Japanese legal system under the existing SOFA. Additionally, under Japanese traffic law, SOFA licensed drivers are subject to steeper fines and more severe penalties for non-injury related traffic offenses such as DUI/DWI, speeding, and illegal parking.

3. Traffic Signs. Traffic signs used throughout mainland Japan and Okinawa are considered international-standard road signs. This means if a vehicle operator has ever driven or been licensed anywhere outside the U. S., many of the road signs depicted in this handbook under Section II and III will likely be easily recognizable.

4. Disclaimer. This handbook includes, where applicable, U.S. and USMC traffic safety regulations while operating motor vehicles aboard USMC camps and installations aboard Okinawa and mainland Japan. Personnel who operate motor vehicles aboard Kadena Air Force Base are also subject to the provisions of 18th Wing Instruction 31-204, *Kadena Air base Motor Vehicle Traffic Supervision*. This handbook does not cover every possible scenario that a SOFA licensed driver may find themselves faced with when operating a motor vehicle on or off base. However, drivers are reminded to remain vigilant, drive defensively, and contact your local traffic safety professionals for further information when traffic conditions or changing laws and regulations require additional interpretation or guidance.

# JAPANESE TRAFFIC REGULATIONS

## OVERVIEW

### 1. Traffic Lanes

a. A primary traffic rule throughout Japan dictates that all vehicles (motorized or pedaled) remain to the far left side of the roadway where road conditions permit. However, vehicles may partially cross or fully cross-over multiple lanes to reach the far right side of the roadway under the following circumstances:

(1) When traveling on multi-lane or one-way traffic only roadways.

(2) Whenever the width of the left half of the road is insufficient for a vehicle to proceed.

(3) Whenever a vehicle is unable to proceed on the left half of the road due to road damage, road construction work, or other impediments.

(4) Whenever attempting to pass another vehicle on a road where the width of the left half is less than 6 meters and road conditions and visibility permit passing.

(5) When merging across multi-lane roadways in order to make a right-hand turn.

b. Vehicles may pass other vehicles under the conditions prescribed above when the center of the road is marked by a solid or broken WHITE line, however, crossing over the center line should be kept to a minimum. The following road markings prohibit passing:

(1) Solid yellow centerline = No passing from either lane.

(2) Double solid yellow centerline = No passing from either lane.

(3) Solid yellow line next to a broken yellow centerline = No passing from the lane nearest the solid yellow line.

Caution: When operating a vehicle at night during inclement weather, road markings and lane separation lines tend to “disappear” due to the type of traffic paint used on Japanese roadways.

c. Whenever a sidewalk is separated from the roadway, vehicles must travel on the roadway. However, a vehicle may cross a sidewalk when this is the only way to enter or exit a business, private residence, or similar location. Pedestrians on sidewalks and crosswalks have the right of way at all times.

d. Vehicles must not be driven into safety zones at any time.

e. Lanes designated for specific types of vehicles (bus lanes for example), are required to travel in the specific lanes designated for that type of vehicle.

f. Bus Priority Lanes are designated “priority” for public buses, school buses and taxi cabs. All other vehicles are required to move out of the lane immediately when a bus or taxi approaches from the rear.

h. Bus exclusive lanes are for buses, taxicabs with passengers, and motorcycles. The only time POVs are allowed in the bus exclusive lane is to make a left turn. In this instance, you can move into the bus exclusive lane just prior to your turn, provided you do not interfere with a bus or taxicab’s right of way.

i. When a public bus is signaling to leave a bus stop, no vehicle shall impede or interfere with the bus unless doing so means abruptly changing speed or traffic lanes which could cause an accident in an adjacent traffic lane.

j. Motorcycles are restricted to the far left side of the roadway on highway 58 from Naha Port to Kadena except within 30 meters (100 feet) of making a right turn. Japanese traffic law requires all motorcycle operators and passengers to wear helmets regardless of the size of the motorcycle. In addition to wearing a helmet, USMC regulations require operators and passengers to wear a reflective vest on and off base. The vest must be reflective international orange and can be integrated as part of a specialized or custom motorcycle jacket if so desired. Reflective vests/material cannot be covered by an outer jacket or backpack when the motorcycle is operation.

## 2. Common “Rules of the Road”

a. All personnel operating or riding as a passenger in a motor vehicle shall wear a seat belt at all times on or off base while the vehicle is in operation.

b. Vehicles will not enter any area of the roadway that is marked or blocked to impede motorized vehicle traffic.

c. Vehicles must come to a complete stop at all stop lines when provided, and at pedestrian crosswalks (when occupied), or at uncontrolled intersections where stopping is required by law.

d. When there are three or more adjoining lanes in the same direction of travel, the far right lane is considered the passing lane; however, vehicles can travel in any lane in accordance with posted speed limits weather and traffic conditions permitting.

e. No vehicle may change its direction of travel without sufficient signaling the intention to do so regardless of whether a turning lane is provided or not.

## 3. Common Traffic Rules for Motor Vehicles on National Motor Vehicle Expressways and Motor Vehicle Exclusive Roadways

a. Motor vehicles entering the primary lane of travel on a National Expressway must use the speed acceleration lane if provided.

b. Motor vehicles intending to exit an expressway must travel in the lane nearest the exit, or use the speed-deceleration lane if provided.

c. Motor vehicles attempting to merge into a primary lane of travel must not obstruct the passage of vehicles already traveling in the primary lane of travel.

d. It is the vehicle operator's responsibility to ensure that a vehicle is mechanically sound, properly and fully serviced, and that cargo is properly and securely stowed prior to traveling on a national expressway or vehicle exclusive roadway. Violation of this requirement, either through negligent breakdown or cargo loss, may result in monetary fines and/or penal action (confinement).

e. Should the need arise to stop a vehicle due to a malfunction or breakdown, the vehicle must be moved completely off the expressway and warning devices posted to clearly indicate that the vehicle is stopped for emergency or maintenance reasons. Warning devices, such as safety triangles and road flares, are available at AAFES service stations, MCCS car care centers, and off-base auto parts stores throughout Japan.

f. Vehicles stopped on national expressways at night are required to display both parking lights and/or emergency flashers and road flares as needed. It is recommended that emergency flashers be used any time a vehicle is stopped along any type of roadway for any purpose.

#### 4. Speed Limits

a. When operating a vehicle in Japan, speed is depicted in kilometers per hour rather than miles per hour. For example, a speed limit sign depicted as "50" means 50 kilometers per hour not 50 miles per hour. Speedometers on all Japanese, and most European and U.S. made cars, depict kilometers per hour vice miles per hour, so complying with posted speed limits should not be difficult.

b. Posted speed limits are significantly less than what most European and U.S. drivers are used to. However, the typical congested narrow roadways throughout Japan and Okinawa dictate that reduced speed limits must be observed in order to ensure public safety. Typical speed limits and associated miles per hour are as follows:

<u>KPH</u>	<u>MPH</u>
20	12
25	16
30	19
35	22
40	25
45	28
50	31
55	34
60	37
70	44
80	50
90	56
100	62

b. The maximum speed limit for motor vehicles operating off U.S. Forces installations is as follows unless reduced speed limits are otherwise posted:

(1) The maximum speed is **60** kilometers per hours for all trucks under 5 tons, and all passenger vehicles (including buses and motorcycles with 251cc engine displacement and higher).

(2) The maximum speed is **50** kilometers per hour for all trucks over 5 tons, all special vehicles (cement trucks, wreckers), and motor cycles or scooters under 251cc.

(3) The maximum speed is **30** kilometers per hour for any 2-wheeled vehicle under 51cc displacement.

c. When traveling on national expressways and exclusive use roadways, vehicles will not be operated at less than the posted minimum speed limit unless it is unsafe to do so due to hazardous weather and/or road conditions.

d. When following another vehicle, Japanese law requires that drivers maintain adequate separation distance to prevent colliding with the vehicle being followed in the event the vehicle makes an abrupt stop. The same is true when initiating a stop or turn. Drivers should avoid making sudden stops or last minute turns. A general rule of thumb is to apply a 2-second rule when driving conditions permit. To calculate the 2-second rule, pick a stationary object along the roadway being traveled. Once the vehicle in front of you crosses that point, start counting. You should reach at least “2” before your vehicle reaches the same point. Note that highly congested urban areas will be difficult to apply this rule, so drivers must remain constantly vigilant when driving in these types of conditions.

5. Overtaking and Passing. “Passing” means going around a slower vehicle to the right on a two-way roadway. “Overtaking” refers to one vehicle moving past a slower vehicle on a one-way or multi-lane roadway.

a. Overtaking and passing violations account for a high percentage of motor vehicle mishaps in Japan due to the limited availability of dedicated passing lanes on typical roadways. Extreme caution must be used any time an attempt is made to overtake or pass a slower vehicle.

b. Vehicles attempting to pass another vehicle must typically pass to the right of the vehicle being overtaken. Certain conditions permit passing on the left; multi-lane roadways for example, or when a vehicle in front of you is stopped or slowing its speed to make a right turn. Additional passing prohibitions include:

(1) Passing a vehicle ahead of you if the vehicle indicates or appears to be in the process of passing another vehicle (dual passing).

(2) Do not pass if the vehicle ahead is proceeding paralleled with and at the same speed as another vehicle (side by side).

(3) Drivers shall not zigzag (cut) into lanes of traffic that are proceeding

slowly or traffic that has stopped. This regulation not only applies at intersections, but any location along the roadway where traffic is proceeding at a slow pace.

(4) Passing is also prohibited within 30 meters of a crosswalk or intersection, on blind curves, near the top of upgrades or on steep downgrades, inside tunnels (unless multi-lane roadway), at railroad crossings, and in designated “No Passing Zones” as marked by a posted traffic sign.

## 6. Parking and Stopping

a. “No Parking Zones” and/or “No Stopping Zones” are designated by posted traffic signs as depicted in Section II. Drivers are not permitted to stop or park at posted areas along the roadway except under the following circumstances:

(1) When executing a temporary stop to clear the lane of travel for an emergency vehicle, as directed by an uniformed police officer, or to avert danger.

(2) Temporary stops at designated intersections or crosswalks as required by law.

b. When parking meters are installed, drivers are required to activate the meter unless otherwise posted. If time limits are exceeded, vehicles may be towed. Recovering a vehicle after it has been towed can be costly and time consuming.

c. Parking a vehicle in any of the following locations is considered a violation of Japanese law unless permission is granted beforehand by a local police box having jurisdiction over the proposed parking location:

(1) Within 3 meters or less of a motor vehicle entrance or exit that provides access to a main roadway.

(2) Within 5 meters or less of a fire station, side of a water source used for firefighting purposes, a fire hydrant, or a fire station’s fire truck entrance/exit road.

(3) Within 1 meter or less of a fire alarm.

(4) Within 5 meters or less of a roadway construction project.

(5) All roadways within U.S. Forces installations are designated as fire lanes and parking on any roadway is prohibited except where otherwise posted or allowed by local regulations.

(6) Parking on grass or bare terrain on U.S. Installations is prohibited unless where otherwise posted.

d. No vehicle will be parked in any location where there is less than 0.5 meters of clear-space space between the vehicle and the roadway. This does not apply for temporary stops to load or unload cargo or people, when the driver leaves the vehicle temporarily (to purchase a soft drink or ice cream along the roadway), or to provide emergency response to a sick or injured person.



- e. Abrupt vehicle stops are to be avoided unless required to avert an accident.
- f. When a vehicle is stopped to take on or discharge people or load or unload cargo, it must be stopped as close as possible to the left edge of the roadway and in such a manner that the vehicle does not impede traffic.
- g. On a one-way street, and if so designated by a posted traffic sign, vehicles may be parked along the right side of the roadway.
- h. Designated parking spots may have police imposed time limits for continuous parking and vehicle operators need to verify time limits if parking a vehicle for an extended time period.
- i. A police officer may order that a vehicle be moved or parked in a different manner so as not to obstruct the flow of traffic. When the vehicle operator is not available, police may have the vehicle moved up to 50 meters from where it was originally parked to help prevent a hazardous condition. If moving the vehicle 50 meters does not solve the problem, the vehicle may be impounded. The vehicle operator assumes all costs associated with moving or impounding the vehicle.

## 7. Roadway Intersections

- a. Vehicle right-of-way at uncontrolled intersections is observed as follows:
  - (1) Vehicles traveling on a priority road have the right-of-way.
  - (2) Vehicles traveling on a wider road have the right-of-way.
  - (3) A vehicle approaching an intersection from left has the right-of-way over a vehicle approaching the intersection from the right.
- b. Any roadway with a centerline or traffic lane that crosses through an intersection is considered the priority road and vehicles traveling on this road have the right of way.
- c. Drivers entering or traveling through an intersection are required to pay attention to other vehicles in the intersection as well as pedestrians that may be in crosswalks in close proximity to the intersection.
- d. Vehicles shall not enter an intersection even if a traffic signal is green if doing so will block cross traffic due to stalled rush-hour traffic.
- e. Vehicles shall not enter crosswalks, railroad crossings, or any other portion of the road that may impede vehicle or pedestrian cross traffic due to stalled rush-hour traffic.
- f. Left turn on a red traffic light after a complete stop is prohibited off-installation unless permitted by a traffic control device (green signal arrow or a white sign with a blue arrow).

g. Left turns on a red traffic light after a complete stop is permitted on-U.S. Installations unless otherwise posted.

8. Vehicle Signaling. When making any type of lane change, or turn in any direction, vehicle operators are required to use either the vehicle's turn signal or hand signal at least 30 meters prior to an intended turn or lane change. Drivers should ensure that vehicle signals have cancelled after the lane change or turn has been made.

9. Use of Vehicle Horn. It is not acceptable to sound a vehicle's horn unless where required by law or in an effort to avert a hazardous situation.

10. Headlight use during Inclement Weather. Japanese traffic law does not require the use of headlights during periods of reduced visibility due to inclement weather. However, headlight use is mandatory aboard all U.S. installations and it's highly encouraged for vehicle operators to use headlights during periods of reduced visibility on or off installation.

11. Vehicle Maintenance Requirements. Under Japanese traffic law, police officers have the right to stop a vehicle when the vehicle does not appear to be mechanically sound or safe to be on the road. Police officers may also conduct an on-the-spot vehicle inspection and provide the vehicle operator with an itemized maintenance list. Police officers may also affix a sticker to the front of the vehicle, clearly visible to all, denoting that the vehicle is in need of maintenance. The sticker may not be removed or destroyed and can only be removed after all discrepancies to the vehicle have been repaired and certified. SOFA licensed drivers should note that vehicles must be inspected every two years and vehicles that pass this inspection must display an up to date inspection sticker in the vehicle's windshield. Vehicles that do not pass this inspection, or vehicles with expired inspection stickers, are not allowed on the road. Contact the local vehicle registration office for further information.

## 12. Vehicle Operator Permits and Associated Documents

a. Vehicle Operator Permit. The USFJ Form 4 EJ is the only authorized form used for SOFA POV licensing purposes in Okinawa and mainland Japan. The form is issued on Okinawa at the MCB Installation Safety Office, located on Camp Foster (building 5831) and at the 18th Security Forces Squadron Pass & ID office located aboard Kadena Air Force base (building 31). The license expires 3-years from date of issue, or upon revocation of SOFA sponsorship. Specific vehicle category endorsements such as motorcycle, bus, or heavy trucks require additional testing prior to the operator being granted an endorsement. Questions regarding specific endorsements should be addressed to the servicing licensing office.

b. Requirements for Obtaining a USFJ Form 4 EJ Operator Permit. At a minimum, the specific requirements outlined below must be met before a USFJ Form 4 EJ will be issued. Waivers may be granted on a case by case basis based on the needs of the command and the individual being licensed.

(1) Applicants must have SOFA status and a valid Identification Card.

(2) Applicants must have either an international driver's license, a valid

operator's permit issued by a State/U.S. Territory, or an OF 346 (U.S. Government Operator's Permit). If the OF 346 is used, it must qualify the operator to drive 1 1/4 ton vehicles or larger.

(3) Family members must provide one of the following documents to verify SOFA status.

(a) Area Clearance.

(b) Sponsor's Permanent Change of Station Orders.

(c) Proof of age. Applicants must be at least 16 to receive a learner's permit.

(4) Active duty personnel under the age of 26 are required to attend an accredited Driver's Improvement Course presented by the MCB Installation Safety Office or show proof of previous attendance.

(5) Applicants must complete an Application for USFJ-4 Driver's Permit (USFJ-4EJ), herein referred to as "application." The application must be signed by appropriate authority as follows:

(a) Active duty military E-6 and above may sign their own application.

(b) Active duty military E-5 and below must have the application signed by their Battalion/Squadron Commander.

(c) Civilians and family members age 18 and over may sign their own application.

(d) Family members under age 18 must have their parent or guardian present to sign their application. A Letter of Responsibility for Learner/Limited Permit must also be completed and submitted to the licensing authority.

(6) Active duty military E-5 and below must receive written authorization from the commander or a person officially "acting" in the commander's place due to the commander's absence. "By direction" is not authorized. Additionally, command signature samples must be provided to or on file at the licensing office. As a general rule, active duty personnel E-3 and below are not authorized to drive a POV. Exceptions to this rule may be granted by the commander on a case-by-case basis only. Further, commanders must closely screen applicants to ensure that applicants have met the minimum time requirements on Okinawa before endorsing the application. Minimum time requirements are as follows:

(a) E-5 and E-4 must have been on the island for at least 30 days.

(b) E-3 and below must have been on the island for at least 60 days.

Note: Time requirements may be extended or waived at the commander's discretion.

(7) Pass a written SOFA test.

Note: The Installation Safety Director will make final determination on all licensing requests and/or applications not specifically covered by applicable orders or directives.

c. Limited Driving Permit. Dependents 16 and 17 years of age qualify for a limited driving permit. Additionally, any first time driver regardless of age that has never been licensed will be issued a limited 30 day driving permit. Limited permits are annotated on the front and back with the words “On Base Only.” The limitation can only be changed or removed by the issuing licensing office.

d. Restricted Driving Permit. Restricted driving permits are issued by direction of the commander or Base Inspector and are annotated front and back with the applicable restriction (i.e., to and from work, medical, chapel, etc.). Removal or modification of the restriction can only be approved by the commander or Base Inspector directing the restriction.

e. Student-learner Driving Permit. Student-learner driving permits are issued to qualifying individuals, military or dependant, who do not have any other type of valid permit in support of completing formal driving instruction. These permits are valid for no more than 90 days. Student-learners permits are only valid aboard U.S. military installations and only when the student driver is accompanied by a licensed vehicle operator. Student-learner’s permits are issued in accordance with the following procedures:

(1) Proof of completion of a certified Driver’s Improvement Course (military only).

(2) Proof of registration in an accredited driver training course such as Kadena’s Schilling Recreation Center driving school.

Note: Upon successful completion of the driving school, the applicant will be issued a limited permit, which will allow the individual to drive “On Base Only” for 30 days. After 30 days, the restriction may be removed upon request. Applicants under age 18 will be issued an “On Base Only” permit until they reach their 18th birthday, or for 30 days, whichever period of time is greater.

f. Duplicate Permits. All requests for duplicate permits must be endorsed by the commander or the Base Inspector and must include a background check with PMO (Traffic Court) to ensure the original permit was not revoked or suspended for disciplinary reasons. Permits that have been lost, stolen, or destroyed will be replaced under the following conditions:

(1) Active duty E-5 and below are required to obtain a letter from their Battalion/Squadron Commander stating that the original permit was not suspended or revoked. Additionally, a new application signed by the commander is required.

(2) Active duty E-6 and above, U. S. civilians, and all family members 18 years of age and older must submit a letter to the Installation Safety Director stating

that the permit has not been suspended, revoked, or otherwise taken for disciplinary reasons. A new application will also need to be completed.

(3) Dependants under 18 years of age are required to visit the MCB Installation Safety Office with a parent or guardian. The parent or guardian is required to provide a letter to the Safety Director stating that the license has not been suspended or revoked. A new application must also be completed.

g. Permit Renewals. Renewals may be issued up to six months after a permit has expired with no testing required provided the operator presents a valid reason why the permit was allowed to expire (e.g., off-island deployment). New application card's need to be filled out for all renewals.

h. Government Vehicle Operator Permit (OF 346). This permit is required for anyone operating a commercial government owned or leased vehicle or Non-Appropriated Funded "Official Vehicle." Dependants will not be issued this permit unless government employment duties require operating this type of vehicle.

i. Motorcycle Operator Permit. Motorcycle riders will be issued a standard USFJ Form 4 EJ stamped "Motorcycle" and endorsed with the rider's Motorcycle Safety Foundation training completion certification number and authorized engine size (CC) limit. The permit will also be endorsed "authorized passengers" if the rider meets the stated requirements for carrying passengers as outlined below. Additionally, the following minimum requirements must be met for anyone requesting a motorcycle endorsement:

(1) Applicants must show proof of having successfully completed a certified Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF) course of instruction. This training is currently provided by the Installation Safety Office locally. MSF training certificates from off-island sources are accepted, but certificates can be no older than 3-years. Local refresher training is required for anyone with a certificate older than 3-years. Basic rider refresher and/or experienced rider training is highly encouraged for all riders every 3-years regardless of experience. USMC uniformed personnel that own and operate a "sport bike" must attend an approved sport bike course of instruction which is also provided locally. Additionally, the following restrictions apply when operating a motorcycle on or off base:

(a) Operators must have a minimum of one-year motorcycle experience prior to having their permit endorsed authorizing the rider to carry passengers.

(b) Operators must wear an approved helmet, shatter-resistant goggles/glasses, long-sleeved shirt or jacket, gloves, long pants, and ankle-high hard-sole boots or shoes. Additionally, operators and passengers must wear a reflective vest on and off base. The vest must be reflective international orange or lime-green and can be integrated as part of a specialized or custom motorcycle jacket if desired. Reflective vests integrated or otherwise, cannot be covered by an outer jacket or backpack when the motorcycle is operation.

(c) USMC uniformed riders must attend at least one motorcycle safety stand down event each year for the endorsement to remain intact. Riders who refuse to attend this

mandatory training will not be issued a renewal and may have their license revoked until this requirement has been met. Riders that are unable to meet this requirement due to off-island operational commitments will be handled on a case by case basis.

j. Associated Vehicle Documents. In addition to the USFJ Form 4 EJ that must be retained by a vehicle operator at all times while operating a motor vehicle on or off base, there are other related vehicle operation documents that must be retained and made available upon request. Minimum documents include:

(1) Military Registration and Certificate of title (DD Form 430).

(2) Japanese Vehicle Inspection Card and Tax Stamp.

(3) Vehicle Registration Decal (affixed to upper-middle portion of windshield).

(4) Annual Road Tax receipt.

(5) Power of Attorney (required for anyone using a vehicle for longer than 24 hours when the vehicle is not registered to the temporary operator).

(6) Proof of insurance. There are two types of insurance that must be made available upon request: Japanese Compulsory Insurance (JCI) which is purchased every two years as part of the vehicle inspection/renewal process, and individual injury/property liability coverage which can be purchased at locally approved insurance offices both on base and off base. Under Japanese law, proof of insurance or the contract itself must be retained in the vehicle at all times.

k. Unauthorized use of a Vehicle Operators Permit. It is unauthorized (and against Japanese law) for any person to:

(1) Display, permit to be displayed, or have in their possession any canceled, revoked, suspended, fictitious, or fraudulently altered vehicle operator's permit.

(2) Lend a vehicle operators permit to any person or knowingly permit the use thereof by any other person.

(3) Fail or refuse to surrender to Military Police upon lawful demand any operator's permit, which has been suspended, revoked or canceled.

(4) Use a false or fictitious name in any application for an operator's permit, or to knowingly make a false statement or to knowingly conceal a material fact, or otherwise commit a fraud in completing an application.

(5) Permit any unlawful use of an operator's permit. No person shall authorize or knowingly permit a motor vehicle owned by them or under their control to be driven upon any highway by any person who is not authorized, or who does not possess an operator's permit for the type of vehicle driven.

13. Pedestrians. Due to the congested nature of typical Japanese urban areas, being vigilant for pedestrians is a key part of ensuring a safe driving experience. Vehicles must be operated in a manner that does not threaten pedestrians or put them at risk. Splashing mud or water on a pedestrian is also a violation of Japanese law. Common pedestrian situations that need to be considered and adhered to include:



a. Vehicle operators must stop or slow their vehicle for a blind or hearing impaired person walking with a white cane, or a child walking alone without an attending guardian so as not to interfere with their right of way.

Note: Japanese children are taught that raising their arm in the air means stop. Vehicle operators must be vigilant for children with their arms raised standing along the side of the road as children tend to raise their arms and attempt to cross the road without first looking or stopping.

b. A pedestrian using a crosswalk has the right of way over vehicles at all times. If you are the pedestrian at a signal-controlled intersection, you must obey all traffic/pedestrian signals.

c. In general, vehicle operators must be constantly watchful for pedestrians and when approaching a crosswalk, must stop or slow the vehicle in order to accommodate a pedestrian's right of way if the pedestrian is in or attempting to enter the cross-walk.

d. On roadways where there is no sidewalk pedestrians must keep to the right in principle; however, when it is dangerous or unavoidable to do so, pedestrians may walk along the left edge of the road and vehicle operators must be observant for pedestrians when driving along roadways that do not have adjoining sidewalks.

14. Vehicle Accidents. Despite best intentions, vehicle accidents happen regardless of how much driving experience or how vigilant a vehicle operator might be. If involved in an accident, the following action is mandated by law:

a. Stop (if not already stopped) as it is against the law to leave the scene of an accident no matter how minor.

b. If not incapacitated, ensure there are no injuries. Injured drivers and/or passengers should be attended to by certified emergency medical technicians unless immediate attention is needed to save a life or prevent serious injury.

c. Exchange contact/insurance information once military and /or local law enforcement personnel arrive.

d. Ensure the accident is accurately photographed and transcribed in the accident

report. Reports should be signed and dated before leaving the scene of the accident.

e. The Japanese custom of paying a “condolence or sympathy visit” to the family of the injured party to express sympathy is expected of SOFA licensed drivers involved in an at-fault accident that causes a personal injury or death. Specific actions to be taken will be coordinated by the vehicle operator’s command for accidents that result in serious injury or death.

15. On-Base Traffic Point System. The “Traffic Point System” is used as an administrative enforcement tool similar to U.S. state point systems to help reinforce the requirement to operate a motor vehicle in a professionally safe manner. The system assesses points against the driving record of personnel who have been found guilty of violating a traffic law, on or off base.

Points are assessed for each traffic violation and certain violations, such as reckless driving, is cause for a higher point assessment. Once an individual receives 12 points, the individual’s USFJ Form 4 EJ can be suspended or revoked. Individuals who choose to drive on a suspended license risk losing the privilege permanently.

16. Off-Base Ticketing & Fines. The off-base traffic violation ticketing/fine system in Japan is a procedure under which certain traffic violations are exempt from criminal prosecution. However, these violations still incur a “fine” that must be paid in order for the violator to avoid criminal prosecution. Further guidance regarding this process is as follows:

a. Traffic fines can be paid at a Japanese post office or at a Bank of Japan. Payment cannot be made directly to the Japanese police issuing the ticket. Paying a fine can be accomplished by two different methods:

(1) Most fines must be paid within 7 days of receiving the citation. An additional day is added if the seventh day falls on a Sunday or a Japanese holiday. This system is called, “Provisional payment.” If you are authorized to use this method, you are not required to report to a police station.

(2) In some cases, you may be required to report to a senior police official at the police station designated on your citation within 10 days if a specific date to report is not listed on your citation. If you do not report to the police station as requested, or choose to pay your fine as outlined above, a notification will be mailed to you by certified mail. You will now be responsible for the certified postal charge as well as any unpaid fine!

If you receive a ticket--do not ignore or discard it! If you do not understand the citation, or disagree with the citation, visit your local Provost Marshal for further guidance. If you fail to pay a traffic fine, you may be subject to criminal prosecution and possible punishment under the Japanese judicial system.

17. Important Safety Reminders. There are many things that contribute to a safe and enjoyable driving experience. While some things are out of a driver’s control such as bad weather, road conditions or “the other driver”, adhering to the things that a driver can control will help offset hazards that can’t be controlled. Examples of things a



vehicle operator can control include:

- a. Never drink alcohol and drive. Never knowingly allow anyone who has been drinking alcohol to get behind the wheel. Under current Japanese law, you can be charged with a DUI/DWI if your BAC is .03, which is essentially a little more than one drink!
- b. Always wear a seat belt when operating a motor vehicle. Ensure your passengers (front & rear) wear seat belts.
- c. Never use a cell phone while driving unless equipped with a hands-free device.
- d. Comply with all posted speed limits, traffic signs, and pedestrian right of ways.
- e. Wear all required personal protective gear when operating a motorcycle. Attend a formal basic or specialized rider's course prior to operating a motorcycle.

## SECTION II

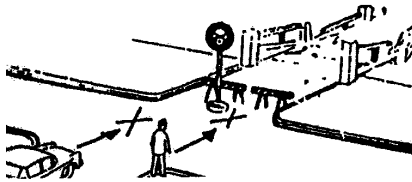
### COMMON JAPANESE TRAFFIC SIGNS

This section depicts common traffic signs that SOFA drivers will likely observe on a recurring basis while commuting throughout Japan. The shape and color of an indicated sign will remain consistent, but the size of the sign may change (larger or smaller) depending on how and where the sign is posted.

**ROAD CLOSED:** Prohibits the transit of pedestrians, bicycles, carts, and motor vehicles of any type.



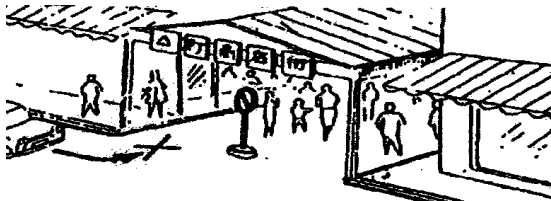
Road Closed



**ROAD CLOSED FOR VEHICLES:** Prohibits the transit of all vehicles, motorized or pedaled.



Road Closed for  
Vehicles



**ROAD CLOSED FOR MOTOR VEHICLES:** Prohibits the transit of all motorized vehicles.

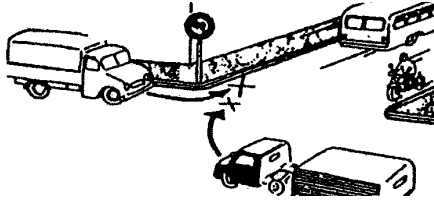


Road Closed for  
Motor Vehicles

**ROAD CLOSED FOR LARGE SIZED TRUCKS AND SPECIAL DUTY VEHICLES:** Prohibits the transit of all trucks with a cross weight of more than 8 tons or with a total overall length of more than 26 feet.



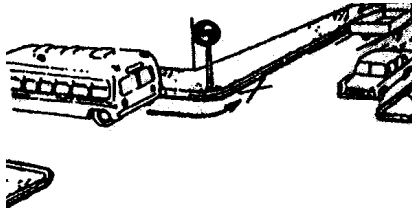
Road Closed for Large Sized Trucks and Special Duty Vehicles



**ROAD CLOSED FOR LARGE SIZED PASSENGER VEHICLES:** Prohibits the transit of large buses.



Road Closed for Long sized Passenger Vehicles



**ROAD CLOSED FOR MOTORCYCLES AND MOTOR-BICYCLES:** Prohibits the transit of motorbikes, scooters and motorcycles only.

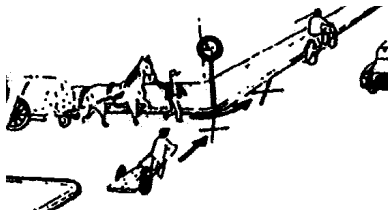


Road Closed for Motorcycles & Motorbikes

**ROAD CLOSED FOR LIGHT VEHICLES EXCEPT BICYCLES:** Prohibits the transit of carts, horses, or ox drawn vehicles.



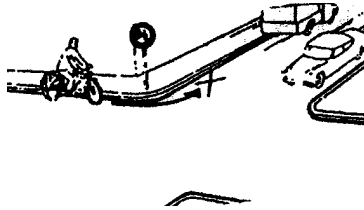
Road Closed for Light Vehicles except Bicycles



**ROAD CLOSED FOR BICYCLES:** Prohibits the transit of bicycles only.



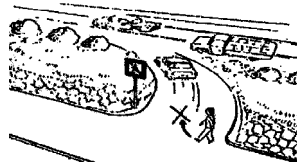
Road Closed for Bicycles



**ROAD CLOSED FOR PEDESTRIANS:** Prohibits pedestrian foot traffic on a road or street where this sign is posted.



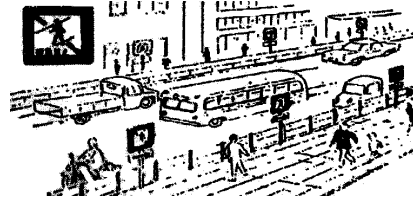
Road Closed for Pedestrians



**NO PEDESTRIAN CROSSING:** Prohibits pedestrians from crossing the road at the posted sign location.



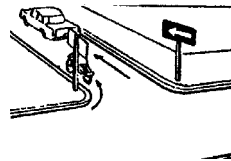
No Pedestrian Crossing



**ONE WAY:** This sign is posted to indicate one-way travel. No backing or “U” turns are allowed on roads posted with this sign.



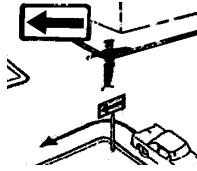
One Way



**MAY TURN LEFT:** When this sign is posted, vehicles may turn left (with caution) when a green arrow is displayed on a traffic signal simultaneously with a red light. Note that left turn is made from traffic lane nearest the curb.



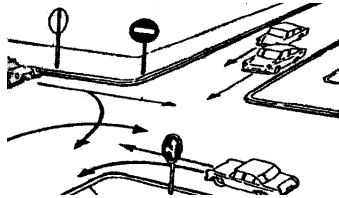
Left Turn  
Allowed on  
Red Light



**MOTOR VEHICLES PROHIBITED TO ENTER:** This sign is posted at the exit of a one-way road and indicates that no vehicle may enter.



Motor Vehicles  
Prohibited to Enter



**DESIGNATED DIRECTION LANE:** This sign may indicate multiple lanes or single lanes.



Direction Designated  
Lane

**RIGHT & LEFT TURN ONLY:** Self-explanatory.



Right & Left  
Turn Only

**LEFT TURN ONLY:** Self-explanatory.



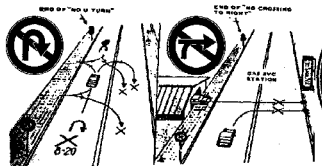
**THROUGH TRAFFIC ONLY:** Designates lane travel in the indicated direction.



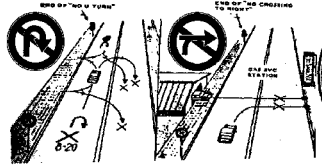
**LEFT OR THROUGH TRAFFIC ONLY:** Designates lane travel in the indicated direction.



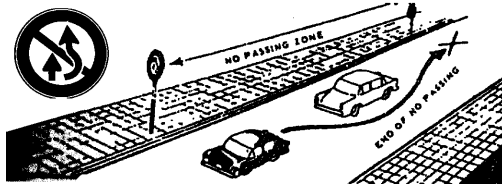
**NO "U" TURN:** Prohibits "U" turns at the intersection or cross-street posted.



**NO RIGHT TURN:** Prohibits turns to the right at the posted intersection.



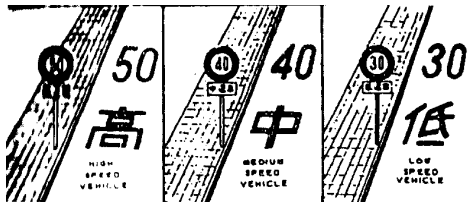
**NO PASSING:** Prohibits passing in posted section of roadway.



**MAXIMUM SPEED LIMIT:** Indicates the maximum speed that a vehicle may travel under "ideal" weather, traffic and road conditions.



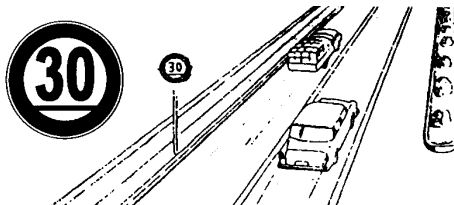
Maximum Speed Limit  
(50 KPH-31 MPH)



**MINIMUM SPEED LIMIT:** Indicates minimum speed vehicles must travel on a posted section of roadway. This sign is generally used on expressways and heavily traveled primary roads. It is important to remember that the only difference between minimum speed signs and maximum speed signs is the heavy line below the minimum speed (number) depicted.



Minimum Speed Limit  
(30 KPH-19 MPH)



**NO PARKING:** Prohibits parking where posted.

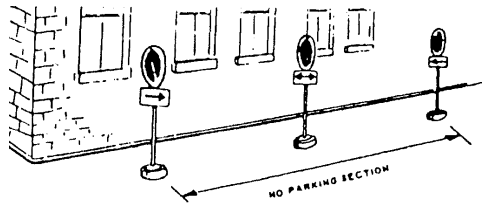


No Parking

**NO PARKING OR STOPPING:** Prohibits parking and stopping at posted locations. Signs marked as depicted in the example indicate no parking or stopping between the hours of 0800 and 2000.



No parking or Stopping



**TEMPORARY PARKING:** Permits temporary parking only where posted. Signs marked as depicted in the example permit parking for no more than one hour between the hours of 0800 and 2000.

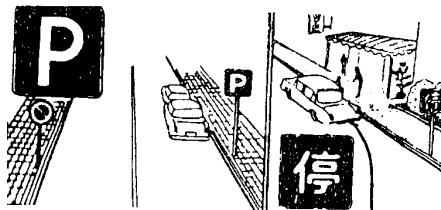


Parking limited to 60 minutes only

**PARKING AREA OR MAY PARK:** Designates authorized parking areas, typically hourly parking garages or lots.

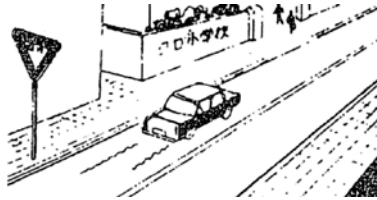


Parking Area or May Park





**PROCEED SLOWLY:** Indicates an area of roadway or intersection where vehicle speed must be reduced in order to be able to stop immediately if required.



**STOP:** Designates a point where vehicles must stop and then proceed when safe to do so or cross traffic permits.



**SOUND HORN:** Designates where vehicles must sound horn where posted.



**PEDESTRIAN CROSS WALK:** Sign A designates general public including children crossing while sign B designates a school crossing.



**MOTOR VEHICLES ONLY:** Prohibits carts, bicycles, powered cycles, and pedestrians from transiting roadway.



**BUS EXCLUSIVE LANE:** Indicates lane that is exclusively used by bus or taxi. An additional sign may be posted to indicate “exclusive use” time of day.



**Bus Exclusive Lane**

**SCHOOL ZONE:** Self-explanatory.



# SECTION III

## OTHER JAPANESE TRAFFIC SIGNS



駐車余地 6m

No parking with-in  
6M of the sign in  
both directions



Road Closed for  
Bicycles



No Double Riding  
On Two Wheeled  
Motor Vehicles



Maximum Width  
(2.2 meters)



Height Limit  
(3.3 meters)



Weight Limit  
(5.5 tons)



Road Closed for  
Vehicles carrying  
Explosives



前方優先道路

Main road has  
right of way



Bumpy Road  
Ahead



Traffic Signal  
Ahead



Caution, side wind



Downgrade  
10%



Right Turn



Rotary ahead



Possible falling stones



Width of Road  
Reduced



Gradual Right  
Curve



Slippery



Upgrade  
10%



Merging Traffic



Number of Lanes Reduced



Forked Road



Side Road Ahead



Sharp Right Curve



Other hazard



Two Way Traffic



Right Turn Followed by a Left Turn



Railroad Crossing



Winding Road



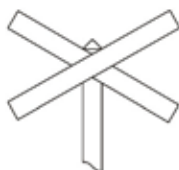
Under Construction



"T" Intersection



Cross Intersection



Railroad Crossing



Proceed on the Left



End of Restricted Zone (b)



Emergency Telephone Available



Exclusive road for Bicyclist



Exclusive road for pedestrian



Exclusive road for Bicyclist & pedestrian



Pull Over Area



Designated Center Line



Safety Zone



Primary Road



May Stop



Bus Priority Lane



May Drive on Tram Way



Double File Bicycle Riding Allowed



Direction Designated Lane



Direction Designated Lane



Direction Designated Lane



Detour



Detour



Beginning of Restricted Zone



In Restricted Zone



End of Restricted Zone(a)



Traffic Lane  
Left-Trolley Buses  
Center-Ordinary Vehicles  
Right-Large size





