

# What to Know About E-bike Safety

E-bikes can be fun and a great way to get around if you know how to ride one safely. Locally, there has been a **rise in e-bike injuries**, especially among middle school, high school, and college students. Here's what to know about e-bikes.

## What is an e-bike?

- An electric bike (e-bike) has a battery-powered motor.
- There are 3 classifications (or types) in California:



**Class I:** Motor assists only when pedaling up to 20 mph.\*

**Class II:** Motor assists when pedaling or by throttle up to 20 mph.\*

**Class III:** Motor assists when pedaling up to 28 mph.\*

Riders must be at least **16 years old** AND **must wear a helmet**, regardless of age.

\*Any bike can reach **HIGHER** speeds, especially when going downhill.

## What are the risks of riding an e-bike?

- **Speed:** This is the biggest risk with any moving vehicle. The higher the speed, the greater the chance of more serious injury.
- **Weight:** E-bikes are usually heavier than traditional bikes. This makes them harder to stop and more difficult to handle once moving.
- **Lack of rider skill and knowledge:** There is no required safety course or licensing for e-bikes. Riders must know the rules of the road and have the skills to ride safely. All cyclists must follow the same laws as vehicle drivers.

## Tips to stay safe on e-bikes:

- **Wear a helmet (with the chin strap fastened).**  
All bicyclists under the age of 18 are required by law to wear a helmet.  
All Class III e-bike riders are required by law to wear a helmet, regardless of age.
- **Take an e-bike training course.**  
Be sure to know the rules of the road and how to maintain your bike.
- **Be visible and predictable.**  
Wear bright or reflective clothing, use bike lights at night, use hand signals, and ride in the same direction as traffic.
- **Start out slow.**  
Practice on roads with bike lanes or less traffic.  
Supervise youth at first to ensure safe riding habits.
- **Stay alert.**  
Avoid being distracted (like talking on a cell phone) or impaired (riding under the influence).
- **Ride solo.**  
Unless the bike has another permanent seat or when using a child safety seat.
- **Be aware of illegal e-bikes.**  
Bikes with motors that assist beyond 28 mph are not classified as e-bikes by California law.



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## Additional Resources

- About the e-bike ride share program (BCycle): [santacruz.bcycle.com](https://santacruz.bcycle.com)
- Commuter education and workshops, including e-bike safety: [gosantacruzcounty.org](https://gosantacruzcounty.org)
- Local active transportation programs and safety resources: [letsmodo.org](https://letsmodo.org)
- Santa Cruz County's Bicycle Traffic School program open to those that received a bicycle citation or anyone in the community: [sctrfficsafety.org](https://sctrfficsafety.org)
- Report a bike or pedestrian travel hazard at: [sccrtc.org](https://sccrtc.org)



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[www.santacruzhealth.org](https://www.santacruzhealth.org)