



# INFORMATION BULLETIN

*for Allied  
Agencies*

May 27, 2026

## BULLETIN NUMBER 285

### ELECTRIC BICYCLES AND OTHER DEVICES

#### GENERAL

Electric bicycles continue to increase in popularity and can be found on roadways and communities across California. Electric bicycles can quickly achieve speed with minimal to moderate physical effort, which can pose safety risks.

Additionally, some electric devices resemble electric bicycles; however, they do not fit the definition. A new vehicle definition for an off-highway electric motorcycles (e-moto) was added to the California Vehicle Code (CVC), effective January 1, 2026. These e-motos are prohibited on public roadways and are required to be registered as off-highway vehicles.

Vehicles that cannot be registered or issued identification numbers cannot be legally operated on-highway or off-highway. The operation of these vehicles is limited to private lands.

NOTE: This bulletin only references CVC requirements. Some counties, cities, and local authorities may have specific ordinances and/or resolutions.

#### DEFINITIONS

**Section 231 CVC, Bicycle:** A device upon which a person may ride, propelled exclusively by human power, except as provided in Section 312.5 CVC, through a belt, chain, or gears, and having one or more wheels. A person riding a bicycle is subject to the provisions of this code specified in Sections 21200 and 21200.5 CVC. An electric bicycle is a bicycle.

**Section 312.5 CVC, Electric Bicycles:** A bicycle equipped with fully operable pedals and an electric motor that does not exceed 750 watts. There are three classifications:



- **Class 1** or “low-speed pedal- assisted.”
  - Motor only provides assistance when the rider is pedaling.
  - Not capable of exclusively propelling the bicycle, with the exception of a start assistance or “walk mode.”
  - Ceases providing assistance when the bicycle speed reaches 20 mph.
  - Not capable of providing assistance to reach speeds greater than 20 mph.
- **Class 2** or “low-speed throttle- assisted.”
  - Motor that may be used exclusively to propel the bicycle.
  - Not capable of providing assistance when the bicycle speed reaches 20 mph.
- **Class 3** or “speed pedal- assisted.”
  - Motor that provides assistance only when the rider is pedaling.
  - Ceases providing assistance when the bicycle speed reaches 28 mph.
  - Equipped with a speedometer.

Class 1 and Class 3 may have start assistance or a “walk mode” that propels the electric bicycle on motor power alone, up to a maximum speed of 3.7 mph.

The following vehicles are not electric bicycles:

- A vehicle with two or three wheels powered by an electric motor that is intended by the manufacturer to be modifiable to attain a speed greater than 20 mph on motor power alone or to attain more than 750 watts of power.
- A vehicle modified to attain a speed greater than 20 mph on motor power alone or to have motor power of more than 750 watts.
- A vehicle that is modified to have its operable pedals removed.

**Section 415(a) CVC, Motor Vehicle:** A vehicle that is self-propelled.

**Section 436.1 CVC, Off-Highway Electric Motorcycle or eMoto:** A two-wheeled, off-highway motorcycle that is designed by the manufacturer for operation primarily off-highway, is powered by an electric motor, has handlebars for steering control, has a straddle seat provided by the manufacturer, and is not equipped with pedals from the manufacturer.



**Section 24016(b) CVC:** An electric bicycle is not a motor vehicle.

## **CALIFORNIA VEHICLE CODE LAWS**

**Section 21200 CVC:** A person riding a bicycle has all the rights and responsibilities of a driver of a vehicle.

**Section 21201(f) CVC:** Electric bicycles are required to have a red reflector or a solid or flashing red light with a built-in reflector on the rear, visible for 500 feet, during all hours.

**Section 21207.5 CVC:** Electric bicycles of all classifications can be ridden anywhere a bicycle can be ridden with the following exceptions:

- The local authority or governing body of a public agency that has jurisdiction over an equestrian trail, or hiking or recreational trail, may prohibit, by ordinance, the operation of an electric bicycle or any class of electric bicycle on that trail.
- The Department of Parks and Recreation may prohibit the operation of an electric bicycle or any class of electric bicycle on any bicycle path or trail within the department's jurisdiction.

**Section 21213(a) CVC:** A person under 16 years of age shall not operate a Class 3 electric bicycle.

**Section 21213(b) CVC:** Helmets are required for all operators and passengers of Class 3 electric bicycles, regardless of age.

**Section 22651.08(a)(1) CVC:** A peace officer may remove a vehicle located within the territorial limits in which the officer may act when a person is operating a vehicle with fewer than four wheels that does not meet the definition of an electric bicycle in Section 312.5 CVC, and is both powered by an electric motor capable of exclusively propelling the vehicle in excess of 20 mph on a highway and operated by an operator who is not licensed to operate the vehicle.

**Section 22651.08(a)(2) CVC:** A peace officer may remove a vehicle located within the territorial limits in which the officer may act when a person is operating a vehicle that is a Class 3 electric bicycle in violation of subdivision (a) of Section 21213 CVC.

**Section 22651.08(c) CVC:** An agency shall release a seized vehicle to the owner, violator, or their agent after a minimum of 48 hours if the owner, violator, or authorized agent's request is made during normal business hours, and the applicable removal, seizure, and storage costs have been paid.

**Section 22651.08(d) CVC:** An agency may require the owner, violator, or the parent or legal guardian of the owner or violator to deliver proof that the violator has completed an



electric bicycle safety and training program, as described in Section 894 of the Streets and Highways Code, or a related local bicycle safety course, if one is available, as prescribed by authorities in the local jurisdiction.

**Section 24016(a) CVC:** Electric bicycles must comply with the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission equipment and manufacturing requirements for bicycles. The electric motor must disengage or cease to function when the brakes are applied, or the motor be engaged through a switch or mechanism that, when released or activated, will cause the electric motor to disengage or cease to function.

**Section 24016(b) CVC:** Insurance, a driver's license, registration, and license plates are not required for riding an electric bicycle.

**Section 24016(c) CVC:** Manufacturers need to certify that the electric bicycle complies with the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission equipment and manufacturing requirements for bicycles.

**Section 24016(d) CVC:** Tampering with or modifying an electric bicycle to change the speed capability is prohibited unless the person appropriately replaces the manufacturer's label indicating the new classification. Electric bicycles need to continue to meet the definition of an electric bicycle when tampered with or modified.

**Section 24016(e) CVC:** It is illegal to sell a product, application, or device, that can modify an electric bicycle's speed capability, so it no longer meets the definition of an electric bicycle.

**Section 38010 CVC:** Off-highway electric motorcycles are subject to identification as an off-highway vehicle.

NOTE: Off-highway electric motorcycles operated upon a highway may be in violation of:

**Section 4000(a)(1) CVC:** Unregistered motor vehicle.

**Section 12500(b) CVC:** No valid M1 driver license endorsement.

**Section 16028(a) CVC:** No insurance.

## **VEHICLE TYPE CODES**

The following is a list of vehicle type codes that should be referenced when documenting crashes or issuing citations:

- 02: Motorcycle
- 03: Motor Driven Cycle
- 04: Bicycle



- 05: Motorized Bicycle or Moped
- 90: Off-Highway Electric Motorcycle (eMoto)
- 91: Electric Bicycle (Class 1, 2, 3)
- 93: Electrically Motorized Board
- 94: Go-Ped® ZIP-Style Electric Scooter, Motorboard
- 95: Miscellaneous Non-Motor Vehicle
- 96: Miscellaneous Motor Vehicle (Snowmobile, Golf Cart, Pocket Bike)
- 97: Low-Speed Vehicle

## **ONLINE BICYCLE SAFETY TRAINING**

On August 15, 2022, Governor Gavin Newsom signed Assembly Bill (AB) 1946 into law. Authored by Assembly Member Tasha Boerner, AB 1946 requires the California Highway Patrol to develop statewide safety and training programs based on evidence-based practices for users of electric bicycles (E-Bikes), including, but not limited to, general E-Bike riding safety, emergency maneuver skills, rules of the road, and laws pertaining to E-Bikes.

Online training can be found at [Electric Bicycle Training and Safety](#).

## **TOWING AND STORAGE**

A tow truck may be called to impound a Class 3 electric bicycle, motorized bicycle, moped, off-highway electric motorcycle, or undefined electric vehicle pursuant to Section 22651.08 CVC.

NOTE: Electric bicycles, off-highway electric motorcycles, and undefined electric vehicles contain various types of lithium-ion batteries, which are potential fire hazards. Damaged or improperly charged batteries are susceptible to thermal runaway, which can result in a sudden and severe fire.

Questions regarding the contents of this Information Bulletin may be directed to Field Support Section at (916) 843-3470.

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