

RISK SIMPLIFIED

RESOURCES

[California Vehicle Code §312.5](#)

[California Vehicle Code §21235](#)

[California Vehicle Code §407.5](#)

[California Highway Patrol Electrical Bicycle Safety and Training](#)

[SB 1271 - Electric bicycles, powered mobility devices, and storage batteries](#)

[AB 965 - VEHICLES: ELECTRIC BICYCLES](#)

QUESTIONS

[Contact PRISM Risk Control](#)

Or call 916.850.7300

Managing E-Bike & E-Scooter Risks: Student Use

by Scarlett Sadler

E-bikes and e-scooters have become more common as students use them to travel to and from school. While these devices provide convenience and independence, they also bring new challenges for schools. Staff often see students weaving through morning drop-off traffic, rushing out of parking lots at the end of the day, or even attempting to ride through crowded walkways. These situations raise concerns about safety, supervision, and liability if an accident occurs. Without clear guidance, schools may face confusion and inconsistent enforcement when trying to manage these devices on campus, not only during the school day, but also at after-school activities, athletic events, and even weekends when facilities are still in use.

California Vehicle Code (CVC) §312.5 divides e-bikes into three classes:

- Class 1 and 2 can go up to 20 mph, and riders under 18 must wear helmets
- Class 3 can reach 28 mph, and riders must be at least 16 and wear helmets at any age

E-scooters are also regulated under the CVC §407.5, which defines them as motorized scooters rather than traditional kick-style or toy scooters. Riders must be at least 16 years old, hold a valid driver's license or learner's permit, and wear a helmet if under 18. In addition, motorized scooters are limited to a maximum speed of 15 mph and must generally be operated on the roadway or designated bike lanes, not sidewalks.

Because of these restrictions, school districts are unlikely to see motorized -scooters at middle or elementary campuses. They are more likely to appear at the high school level where students are old enough to hold permits or licenses.

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Beyond the baseline rules, the legislature has recently passed additional measures to improve safety. The California Highway Patrol (CHP), under AB 1946, offers a statewide e-bike safety training program. SB 1271 requires that e-bike batteries and electrical systems meet certification standards to reduce the risk of fire. Most recently, AB 965 was signed into law, prohibiting the sale of Class 3 e-bikes to anyone under 16.

Building on these statewide efforts, some agencies are piloting local programs to address community-specific concerns. In Marin County, officials can require riders of certain e-bikes to be at least 16 and mandate helmet use, aiming to reduce youth injuries and promote safer riding. In San Diego County, a pilot program allows cities to prohibit children under 12 from riding e-bikes and requires public outreach before enforcement begins. These programs give local governments flexibility to test new approaches while the state evaluates long-term solutions.

For school districts, the most immediate concern remains student safety and supervision. If a student rides unsafely on campus, ignores helmet rules, or uses a device that is not allowed under the law, questions may quickly arise about whether the district took reasonable steps to enforce expectations.

Another challenge is storage and charging. Students may bring e-bikes or e-scooters onto campus, where theft, vandalism, and battery fires are real risks. Indoor charging, in particular, can create fire hazards if devices or batteries are damaged or uncertified.

School districts may also encounter modified or inappropriate devices, such as throttle-only bikes or dirt bikes, which may not be legal for student use. These can be difficult to regulate consistently without clear rules in place.

While banning these devices might seem like a solution, it is rarely practical. Instead, school districts can take steps to reduce risk and create safer environments:

- **Permits and Registration** – Districts can create a sticker or permit system so only registered devices are allowed on campus. A formal policy should outline eligibility, expectations, and consequences for misuse. This provides clarity for staff, students, and families, while also making it easier to enforce rules and track who is responsible for each bike or scooter.
- **Parent and Student Agreements** – Requiring a signed form helps ensure legal guardians understand the rules, acknowledge the risks and accept responsibility for following them. Providing educational materials alongside the agreement helps families see the reasoning behind the rules, not just the requirements.
- **Safety Education Requirements** – Some districts require students to complete a safety training program (such as the CHP's online course) before riding to school. Expanding this to include materials for parents ensures that families, as well as students, are aware of the risks, legal requirements, and safe practices. This shared understanding between home and school helps reinforce safer behavior.

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- **Safe Storage, Charging, and Security**– School districts can provide bike racks or designated outdoor areas for storage, while making clear that indoor charging is not allowed unless supervised and batteries are certified. Family notices should also clarify that the district is not responsible for theft or damage to personal devices. However, schools can support reducing the risks by encouraging students to use locks, promptly report incidents, and work with campus security when problems occur. Clear communication ensures families understand the limits of the school’s role along with personal responsibility.
- **Clear Communication** – Posting signs for dismount zones, helmet and age requirements, and other expectations — along with seasonal safety reminders for families — can improve compliance and reduce accidents. Expectations should also extend to after-school activities, athletic events, and weekend use.
- **Enforcement Authority** – School districts should reserve the right to remove privileges or confiscate devices if safety rules are ignored. This expectation is often written directly into a parent–student agreement, so families understand from the start that violations can result in lost riding privileges

E-bikes and e-scooters offer many benefits, but they also bring new responsibilities for schools. By setting thoughtful policies, communicating expectations, and enforcing rules consistently, school districts can help students use these devices more safely while protecting themselves from unnecessary risk. Managing this issue is less about restricting independence and more about finding balanced solutions that keep students, staff, and the community safe. For further assistance or questions about E-Bikes & E-Scooters in Schools, contact [Risk Control](#).