

E-BIKES AND SROS: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW



WHAT AN E-BIKE IS:

ALL E-BIKES

The motor must be less than 750 watts. E-bike top speeds are capped at 28 mph, unless the bike has a throttle. In that case, the maximum speed is limited to 20 mph. Once the maximum speed is reached, the motor must shut off. Working pedals are required.

CLASS 1 E-BIKES

Class 1 e-bikes have a maximum speed of 20 mph. Their motors use pedal assist, meaning the motor stops when the rider stops pedaling. Class 1 e-bikes may be ridden on paths and trails without requiring local permission.

CLASS 2 E-BIKES

Class 2 e-bikes have a maximum speed of 20 mph and are equipped with a throttle. They may also include pedal assist. When the bike reaches its maximum speed, the motor shuts off. Class 2 e-bikes are allowed on surfaced paths and trails; access to natural surface paths and trails depends on local ordinances.

CLASS 3 E-BIKES

Class 3 e-bikes have a maximum speed of 28 mph and operate using pedal assist. They must be equipped with a speedometer. Children under 16 are not allowed to ride Class 3 e-bikes, except as passengers (if the bike is designed to carry one). Class 3 e-bikes are not permitted on multi-use trails.

IS IT AN E-BIKE?

For many people, including kids, e-bikes have become an increasingly popular way to get to work, travel to school, and enjoy the outdoors. As their popularity grows, it is important to understand which vehicles qualify as e-bikes under Connecticut law. The graphic to the left outlines Connecticut's e-bike criteria. Vehicles that do not meet those criteria are classified as either motor-driven cycles or motorcycles. These vehicles are legal to operate, but they are subject to different requirements, including, at a minimum, the operator holding a valid driver's license.

PEDALS DON'T AUTOMATICALLY MEAN IT'S AN E-BIKE

One reason vehicle classification can be confusing is that many people associate pedals with bicycles rather than motorcycles. Connecticut law requires all e-bikes, regardless of class, to have functional pedals. However, some manufacturers add pedals to higher-powered vehicles and market them as e-bikes even though they do not meet the state's legal definition. In some cases, the pedals are not functional and serve only to make the vehicle appear bicycle-like. Under Connecticut law, a vehicle with an electric motor rated at 750 watts or more is classified as a motor-driven cycle, while a vehicle with more than 3,700 watts of power or an engine displacement of at least 50 cc is classified as a motorcycle, regardless of whether it has pedals.

OTHER THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

- Per state law, all e-bikes should have a label that includes their class, max speed, and wattage.
- E-bikes with throttles are limited to 20 mph, even if there is an additional pedal-assist mode. Any e-bike that goes faster than 20 mph with a throttle or 28 mph with pedal assist is not an e-bike.
- Modifications matter! Modifications that alter the vehicle to the point that it no longer meets the legal definition are not e-bikes. The use of an app, a start button, or modifications to the drive system specifically are banned.



HELMETS ARE REQUIRED FOR ALL E-BIKE RIDERS REGARDLESS OF AGE OR EXPERIENCE LEVEL.

E-BIKES AND SROS: SAFETY TIPS FOR STUDENTS

WEAR A HELMET

According to state law, all e-bike riders are required to wear a helmet. Considering the speeds e-bikes can reach, it might be helpful to explore options like motorcycle helmets or those specifically designed for e-bikes, such as ones that meet the NTA-8776 classification.

This is especially true for anyone riding a Class 3 e-bike, which has a max speed of 28 mph.



FOLLOW THE RULES OF THE ROAD

Understanding the rules of the road is really important because e-bikes are considered to be vehicles and should be ridden on the road. Cyclists should be in the travel lane going the same way as traffic. Be sure to follow all signs and signals, including stop signs and traffic lights. Since e-bikes don't have built-in lights to signal, don't forget to use the proper hand signals as shown on the right. Bike lanes and multi-use paths can also be a great option.

BE SAFE, BE SEEN

Just like with traditional bikes, during low light conditions, e-bikes should have a red light or reflector on the back, a white light on the front, and reflective strips on the sides. Even if it's not completely dark, it's always a good idea to wear bright or reflective clothing and accessories. Bicyclists are among the smallest road users, so staying visible is really important to keep safe.

HAND SIGNALS FOR BICYCLISTS

