

Consumer alert: Beware of e-motos being sold as 'e-bikes' in Minnesota

E-motos, sometimes misrepresented as e-bikes, often move at dangerously high speeds.

Issued by the Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota (BikeMN) in partnership with the Minnesota Department of Public Safety, Minnesota Safety Council, Minnesota Sheriff's Association, and the Minnesota Chiefs of Police Association.

As we head into this holiday season, Minnesota residents are urged to use caution when purchasing electric bicycles online. Direct-to-consumer companies are marketing and selling one, two and three-wheeled motorized vehicles as “e-bikes” when, under Minnesota law, they are not. These products — commonly referred to as **e-motos** — pose safety risks and are illegal to operate as bicycles on Minnesota roadways, trails and paths.

What you need to know about what's legal

Under Minnesota law, a legal electric-assisted bicycle must meet all of the following requirements:

- The motor must not exceed **750 watts** of power.
- The maximum assisted speed must not exceed **28 miles per hour**.
- The bicycle must have **fully functional pedals** that can be used to propel the bike.

Any vehicle that does not meet these requirements is **not considered an e-bike** under Minnesota law. If the bike has any of the following it is not a legal e-bike:

- motorcycle-style throttles
- oversized/overpowered motors
- pedals that are purely decorative or nonfunctional

Age restrictions also apply. Even legal e-bikes may not be operated by anyone under the age of **15**.

Unfortunately, many online retailers continue to sell e-motos and misrepresent them as e-bikes. These vehicles often cannot be legally registered or insured, and their use on public roads, sidewalks and trails may result in fines, confiscation or other penalties. More importantly, they pose serious safety hazards for riders, pedestrians and other road users.

What consumers should do

- Verify motor wattage, not just maximum assisted speed.
- Test ride the bike whenever possible to see if it truly functions as a bike even without motor assistance.
- To prevent a fire hazard, only use factory-recommended chargers to charge the battery.

To ensure you are purchasing a safe and legal e-bike, your best option is to work with a trusted ‘brick-and-mortar’ Minnesota bicycle shop. Reputable bike shops understand state and local regulations, can help you find the right e-bike for your needs, and will provide the service and support you need to ride safely.

Ride smart, ride safe

The Minnesota Department of Transportation is currently conducting a study on the safety and impact of e-bike usage. Much is being learned right now about how to safely operate these e-bikes and their impact on overall rider safety and the roads.

Riders should exercise caution whenever out on the road and follow all applicable laws.

Remember, when riding any bicycle:

- Wear a helmet and wear bright reflective gear.
- Follow all traffic control signs and signals (the only exception is that stop signs may be treated as yield signs when the intersection is clear).
- Use signals, if able, to let people behind you know when you're turning.
- Use good judgment. Remember that you are sharing the road and it is important to be predictable to avoid a crash.
- Use a headlight and rear reflectors when it's dark.

BikeMN, the Minnesota Department of Public Safety and partners encourage all Minnesotans to ride smart, ride safe and make informed choices when considering an e-bike purchase.

