



HUNTINGTON BEACH POLICE DEPARTMENT

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Huntington Beach Launches Nation's First Police-Led Student E-Bike Safety Program Amid Surge in Youth Collisions

Huntington Beach has launched the nation's first police-led student e-bike safety program in response to a sharp and ongoing rise in collisions involving young riders. In just three years, reported crashes in the city have more than doubled - from 72 in 2022 to 135 in 2023, and 147 in 2024. Current projections suggest 2025 will surpass 160, marking a 120% increase since 2022.

"This is a public safety issue we can't afford to ignore," said Huntington Beach Mayor Pat Burns. "We're seeing too many kids injured in preventable crashes. This program is about giving them the tools to ride safely and confidently."

The first-of-its-kind program, developed by the Huntington Beach Police Department, is designed to improve rider safety through hands-on training in a controlled environment. The free course includes real-world instruction in emergency braking, obstacle navigation, reaction-time awareness, and helmet use. Parents are required to attend alongside their children, creating a shared learning experience focused on safety both on the road and at home.

"We've seen the data. We've taken the calls. Now we're taking action," said Police Chief Eric Parra. "This is about education, not punishment. We're giving families a real opportunity to build safer habits — and we hope other cities will follow our lead."

The 70-minute sessions are intended for youth riders, with an emphasis on replicating real-world scenarios at increasingly challenging speeds. Sergeant Mike Thomas, who developed the curriculum based on a Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST)-certified 40-hour instructor course, leads the trainings.

"Kids don't realize how fast these bikes really go until they're in a braking drill or trying to avoid an obstacle," said Sgt. Thomas. "We want them to experience the risks in a controlled space - before it happens on the street."

According to data from CHOC, youth e-bike trauma cases have increased more than 1,500% since 2019. Huntington Beach currently leads Orange County in micromobility-related trauma admissions involving riders under 18. Nearly half of local e-bike collisions



involve untrained, underage riders — many of whom were **not wearing helmets at the time of the crash.**

"We're seeing more serious head injuries because kids are riding at high speeds with no helmet and no training," said Amy Frias, CHOC/Rady Children's Health Community Safety Educator and Safe Kids OC Coordinator. "It's a dangerous combination, and the numbers we're seeing in the trauma center are only part of the story."

Since May 2023, HBPD has responded to more than 1,300 micromobility-related nuisance calls, ranging from traffic violations to near-miss incidents. But even those figures likely don't capture the full scope of the issue. **"Many areas don't track e-bike crashes separately from regular bicycle collisions, or they don't report them at all,"** said Sgt. Thomas. *"So the problem is probably far worse than what we're seeing on paper. And with the e-bike industry projected to explode over the next decade, we need to start building safe habits now."*

The Huntington Beach Union High School District is reviewing the program for potential districtwide adoption in Fall 2025. If approved, the training could become a mandatory requirement for students who ride e-bikes to school.

So far, 24 police officers from 10 agencies have completed the POST e-bike safety instructor training, signaling growing interest from law enforcement statewide.

Additional safety events are scheduled throughout the summer, including a public training session on Friday, June 27. Vendors and partners will provide safety materials, helmet fittings, and e-bike raffle giveaways to encourage participation. For details, visit: <https://bit.ly/eBikeRiderTraining>.

For more information about the POST-certified course or HBPD's e-bike Rider Training events, contact Sgt. Mike Thomas at mthomas@hbpd.org.



Data: Why This Matters

Top 5 Cities in Orange County for E-Bike Collisions:

- Huntington Beach
- Irvine
- Santa Ana
- Orange
- Newport Beach

CHOC Youth E-Bike Trauma Admissions:

- 2019: 7
- 2020: 13
- 2021: 13
- 2022: 39
- 2023: 67
- 2024: 116 (mid-year)

E-bike trauma injuries have increased over 1,500% since 2019.

Ages Most Affected (2019–2024):

- Age 13: 39 injuries
- Age 14: 60 injuries
- Age 15: 40 injuries

Most trauma patients are between the ages of 12 and 15, though cases have been reported in children as young as 10 months old.

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