

# CALIFORNIA'S ELECTRIC BICYCLE LAW



## CALIFORNIA'S ELECTRIC BICYCLE LAW FOR THE ROAD

- » Electric bicycles are regulated like bicycles. The same rules of the road apply to both electric bicycles and human-powered bicycles.
- » Electric bicycles are not subject to the registration, licensing, or insurance requirements that apply to motor vehicles.
- » California designates three classes of electric bicycles:
  - Class 1: Bicycle equipped with a motor that provides assistance only when the rider is pedaling, and that ceases to provide assistance when the electric bicycle reaches 20 mph.
  - Class 2: Bicycle equipped with a throttle-actuated motor, that ceases to provide assistance when the electric bicycle reaches 20 mph.
  - Class 3: Bicycle equipped with a motor that provides assistance only when the rider is pedaling, and that ceases to provide assistance when the electric bicycle reaches 28 mph.

| VEHICLE TYPE             | VEHICLE        |                                    |                     | USER             |               |              | BIKEWAY ACCESS    |                    |                      |                         |
|--------------------------|----------------|------------------------------------|---------------------|------------------|---------------|--------------|-------------------|--------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
|                          | PEDAL OPERATED | MAXIMUM MOTOR-ASSISTED SPEED (MPH) | MINIMUM AGE (YEARS) | DRIVER'S LICENSE | LICENSE PLATE | HELMET       | CLASS I BIKE PATH | CLASS II BIKE LANE | CLASS III BIKE ROUTE | CLASS IV PROTECTED LANE |
| BICYCLE                  | YES            | N/A                                | N/A                 | NO               | NO            | 17 AND UNDER | YES               | YES                | YES                  | YES                     |
| CLASS 1 ELECTRIC BICYCLE | YES            | 20                                 | N/A                 | NO               | NO            | 17 AND UNDER | YES               | YES                | YES                  | YES                     |
| CLASS 2 ELECTRIC BICYCLE | NO             | 20                                 | N/A                 | NO               | NO            | 17 AND UNDER | YES               | YES                | YES                  | YES                     |
| CLASS 3 ELECTRIC BICYCLE | YES            | 28                                 | 16                  | NO               | NO            | YES          | YES               | YES                | YES                  | YES                     |
| MOPED                    | NO             | N/A                                | 16                  | YES              | YES           | YES          | NO                | YES                | YES                  | NO                      |

\* The following California laws are referenced: Cal. Veh. Code, § 312.5; § 21200 - 21212; § 21207.5; § 24016

- » Helmets are required for riders of Class 3 electric bicycles. Persons under 16 years of age may not ride a Class 3 electric bicycle (unless as a passenger). There are certain access restrictions for Class 3 electric bicycle riders.
- » Local governments have the authority to restrict the use of electric bicycles under motor power on bike paths. When in doubt, check with your town, city, or county for local rules and regulations.

## eMTB GUIDELINES

- » On federal, state, county and local trails, e-mountain bike (eMTB) access varies significantly.
- » Generally, any natural surface trail that is designated as open to both motorized and non-motorized uses is also open to eMTBs.
- » eMTBs may not be allowed on trails managed for non-motorized activities.
- » Do not ride your eMTB in areas where the local rules are unclear. Ride legally and only on authorized trails to show that mountain bikers are responsible trail users.
- » When in doubt, ask your local land manager about access to specific trails. Local land rules change frequently.

## CHECK OUT

- » A map of great eMTB rides at [peopleforbikes.org/emtb](http://peopleforbikes.org/emtb)
- » eMTB "Adventures" at [peopleforbikes.org/e-bikes](http://peopleforbikes.org/e-bikes)

## With an electric bicycle, bicyclists can ride more often, farther, and for more trips.

Electric bicycles are designed to be as safe as traditional bicycles, do not compromise consumer safety, and benefit bicyclists who may be discouraged from riding a traditional bicycle due to limited physical fitness, age, disability or convenience.

In many states, electric bicycles are regulated under antiquated laws primarily aimed at combustion engine vehicles such as mopeds or scooters. PeopleForBikes is clarifying state laws governing the use of electric bicycles in the U.S. Every state's law is different, but the objective is to ensure that low-speed electric bicycles are regulated similarly to traditional, human-powered bicycles.

## CALIFORNIA'S ELECTRIC BICYCLE LAW FOR TRAILS

- » LOCAL: Consult your local land management agency.
- » STATE: California State Parks currently allows Class 1 and Class 3 electric bicycles on a park by park basis. Please find more information on the [California State Parks website](http://California State Parks website). When in doubt, contact your local state park for its electric bicycle policy before riding.
- » FEDERAL: On federal lands, eMTBs are considered motorized vehicles and have access to motorized trails. Contact the US Forest Service Pacific Southwest Regional Office or the BLM California State Office for more information.

## GREAT eMTB RIDES IN CALIFORNIA

- » **Downieville Classic**  
Gold Valley | 14 miles
- » **Best of Wilder Ranch**  
Santa Cruz | 16.5 miles
- » **Cannell Trail**  
Kernville | 24.8 miles
- » **Cook and Green Trail**  
Klamath National Forest | 14.2 miles



## Learn more at PeopleForBikes.org

- » Blogs and webinars
- » Buying guide
- » Electric bicycle laws around the country
- » Retailer materials
- » Electric bicycle statistics and research
- » eMTB management resources

