

Know what you're riding: Richmond RCMP urges parents to check before kids hit the road on e-bikes

With more electric two-wheelers showing up on Richmond roads, dykes, and multi-use paths, Richmond RCMP is asking parents and riders to take a closer look at their e-bikes to ensure compliance with the law.

Many devices marketed and sold as “e-bikes” do not meet the legal definition under B.C. law, and the consequences for getting it wrong can land on the parent, not just the rider.

Richmond RCMP Road Safety Unit has seen a steady increase in calls involving young riders on high-powered electric devices operating at unsafe speeds, on sidewalks, without helmets, and in some cases carrying passengers the device was never designed to hold. Many reports involving e-bikes have involved riders under 16 on machines that are not legally e-bikes at all.

“The bike in your kid’s garage may have been sold to you as an e-bike, but if it can hit 50 or 60 kilometers an hour and the pedals are just for show, it’s a motor vehicle under the law,” says Constable Frank Tarape, Richmond RCMP Road Safety Unit. “That changes who can ride it, where it can be ridden, and who is legally responsible when something goes wrong. We want parents to have that information before there is a collision, not after.”

Richmond’s flat geography and extensive bike and trail network make many micromobility devices increasingly popular amongst residents, commuters, and youth. As a participating community in the Province’s Electric Kick Scooter Pilot Project, Richmond welcomes legal e-bike and e-scooter use but reminds riders that these paths are shared with pedestrians, families with strollers, and slower cyclists. A rider travelling on a multi-use path on an illegal dirt bike poses a real risk of serious injury to themselves and others.

Parents and guardians who knowingly allow an underage youth or child to operate on one of these devices can face fines up to \$2,000 under provincial regulations. If the device is classified as a motor vehicle and is involved in a collision, the family may also face uninsured liability, meaning personal financial responsibility for injuries or damages, and additional consequences.

The three categories parents need to understand

Not every electric device on two wheels is the same under the law. The differences come down to motor power, top speed, and whether the pedals work.

Legal e-bikes are bicycles with a motor that are able to assist pedalling. They have working pedals, a motor capped at 500W (standard) or 250W (light), and stop providing motor assistance at 32 km/h or 25 km/h respectively. Riders must be 16+ for a standard e-bike or 14+ for a light e-bike. A bicycle helmet is required. No license, registration, or insurance is needed. These can be ridden anywhere a regular bicycle is permitted.

E-dirt bikes and high-powered e-bikes/motorcycles, including popular brands sold online or at specialty shops, are not legal e-bikes if they exceed 32 km/h, have a motor over 500W, or lack functioning pedals. Under the B.C. Motor Vehicle Act, these are motor vehicles. Most cannot be registered or insured for road use as they lack a Canadian Motor Vehicle Safety Standard (CMVSS) label, which means they are not legal on any Richmond street, sidewalk, bike lane, multi-use path, or dyke trail. Use is restricted to

private property with the owner's permission. Public parks, school fields, and greenways do not qualify as off-road.

E-scooters (electric kick scooters) are legal in Richmond, but only under certain conditions. The City of Richmond is participating in the Province's Electric Kick Scooter Pilot Project. Riders must be 16 or older, wear a helmet, and cannot carry passengers. E-scooters must only be operated on designated cycling facilities (such as bike lanes), local streets with a speed limit of 50 km/h or less, streets with a maximum speed of 30 km/h, and off-street paved pathways or parks marked for shared-use. E-scooters are not permitted on sidewalks or unpaved trails. Maximum speed is 20 km/h on roadways and 15 km/h on shared pathways, and riders must slow down to a walking pace when passing pedestrians. Provincial fines for dangerous operation can reach up to \$2,000, vehicle impound and/or seizure, and Richmond bylaw fines range from \$95 to \$175.

Fines under the Motor Vehicle Act

Riders operating an unregistered, uninsured electric motorcycle or e-dirt bike on a public roadway can face multiple fines in a single stop, including:

- No insurance: \$598
- No driver's licence: \$276
- No helmet: \$138
- Failing to stop for a peace officer: additional fines and possible vehicle impoundment

Attempting to flee from police can also result in charges under the Criminal Code, which carries the possibility of arrest, a criminal record, and a lengthy driving prohibition, consequences that can follow a young person well into adulthood. Riders could also face arrest and jail time for dangerous operation of a conveyance under the Criminal Code, with sentences up to 10 years imprisonment, increasing to 14 years if bodily harm results and up to life imprisonment if death results.

Is it a legal e-bike? A check for parents before the next ride

Richmond RCMP encourages every parent or guardian to ask four questions about the bike in their garage:

1. **Does it have working pedals that can propel the bike on their own?** If no, it's not a legal e-bike.
2. **Does the motor stop assisting at 32 km/h or less?** If no, it's not a legal e-bike.
3. **Is the motor 500W or less?** If no, it's not a legal e-bike.
4. **Is your child the legal minimum age (14 for light, 16 for standard)?** If no, they cannot legally ride it on any public road or path, not even a legal e-bike.

If the answer to any of these is no, the bike is likely a motor vehicle and cannot legally be operated on Richmond roads, sidewalks, bike lanes, or multi-use paths.

Education first, and enforcement when needed

Richmond RCMP's approach reflects the detachment's commitment to public safety through education, partnership, and prevention. This builds on the Richmond RCMP's ongoing e-scooter and active transportation education program, including community outreach and a public safety video released in 2023. The Province's 2025 Electric Kick Scooter Pilot Project Interim Report specifically recognized

Richmond RCMP for organizing community events in 2024 and 2025 focused on e-scooter safety and compliance.

Officers will continue to engage with riders, parents, and retailers, and will be visible at known hotspots throughout the spring and summer months. Enforcement action will be taken where unsafe riding, repeat violations, or risks to public safety are observed.

“Many parents we speak to genuinely didn’t realize what they bought wasn’t legal,” says Cst. Tarape.

“We want this to be a conversation at the kitchen table before it becomes a conversation at the side of the road with police, or in the hospital. Helmets, legal devices, and following the rules are the basics that keep a fun ride from ending in tragedy.”

Quick reference: know before you ride

	Legal E-Bike	High-Powered E-Bike / E-Dirt Bike	E-Scooter
Working pedals?	Required	Often no	No
Top motor-assisted speed	25 km/h (light) 32 km/h (standard)	Often 50-70+ km/h	25 km/h on roads 15 km/h on shared pathways
Motor power	250W (light) 500W (standard)	Over 500W; often 1000-8000W	Limited under provincial pilot rules
Legal minimum age	14+ (light) 16+ (standard)	Not legal on public roads at any age	16+
Where can I ride?	Anywhere bicycles are allowed	Private property only, with owner’s permission.	Legal in Richmond – bike lanes, streets up to 50km/h, marked shared pathways. Not on sidewalks or unpaved trails.
Licence / insurance?	None required	Cannot be registered or insured. Most lack the CMVSS compliance label required for road legality.	None required.
Helmet?	Bicycle helmet required	Approved motorcycle helmet required	Approved helmet required

Report unsafe riding

The public is encouraged to report unsafe riding behaviour to their police of jurisdiction.

More information

For full provincial rules on e-bikes and motor-assisted cycles, visit the B.C. Government’s [E-Bike Requirements page](#).

For Richmond’s e-scooter rules and local bylaws, visit the City of Richmond’s [E-Scooter Information page](#).

To check whether a specific device is legal for road use in B.C., visit the B.C. Government's [Personal Mobility Devices page](#).