It’s a revolution that seemed to ride in from out of nowhere. Electric bicycles – e-bikes – have exploded in popularity recently. Between 2020 and 2023, it’s predicted that 130 million e-bikes will be sold.

It is a far cry from just a few years ago. From 2006 through 2012, e-bikes made up just 1 percent of all annual bike sales. In 2013, only 185,000 e-bikes were sold in the US.

Yet, with technology comes risk. Between January 2018 and September 2019, 10 people died from injuries sustained while using e-bikes. According to the US Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), accidents related to e-bike use have resulted in an estimated 200,000 emergency room visits and a 70% spike in injuries overall.

Some of those injuries impact other parties—for example, a crash. In September 2021, a woman was killed in California, and her two children were injured when she crashed her e-bike on a local trail. In three years, 41 deaths in the US could be attributed to e-bikes, e-scooters, and hoverboards.

**CLASSIFYING E-BIKES**

If you own an e-bike, you may not be covered by your insurance policy. Classified as bicycles, e-bikes do not require a license, nor do they require safety training. Additionally, there is no minimum age requirement for operating an e-bike. That can be problematic considering their speeds – e-bikes can reach 20 miles per hour, and some classes of e-bikes can deliver a 29-mph ride.

These bikes have fallen into a gap between a bicycle and a motor vehicle. Because CPSC regulates e-bikes, it must comply with safety standards set forth for conventional bicycles. Additionally, because they are considered bicycles, they are not regulated under motor vehicle standards.

Insurance is not as straightforward as you would think. Many consumers assume that e-bikes are covered under their homeowners or renter policies or that their auto insurance policy will cover it as a motorized vehicle. However, neither homeowners nor automobile policies provide any medical payments or uninsured motorist liability coverage when operating an e-bike.

While you may not see e-bike as a named exclusion, you must pay attention to definitions, such as “motorized vehicle.” You won’t find coverage for your own injuries from riding an e-bike on your home or auto policy. Other risks are also creating serious, potentially costly gaps in coverage, which include:

- **First-party physical damage** – most homeowners carriers classify e-bikes as motorized vehicles; therefore, coverage for the e-bike is excluded.
- **Third-party bodily injury and/or property damage** – most homeowners’ policies do not cover injury or damage that you cause while riding your e-bike.
FINDING COVERAGE AND RELIEF

There may not be relief found in the umbrella and excess liability market. These policies require underlying insurance for specific types of exposures. Without underlying coverage for e-bikes, the umbrella policy may not respond.

As claims mount, insurance carriers are adding more specific exclusions to their policies regarding e-bikes. Homeowners’ policies are expected to carry language that excludes coverage. That does not mean coverage will not be available. Some insurance carriers have products on the market now that cover e-bikes. As the popularity of these e-vehicles grows, carriers expect to see more traditional motorcycle markets devise their own e-bike products.

It is important to understand the requirements of your policy. Review policies with your account manager to determine if e-bikes are covered. In most cases, you will need a separate policy covering the risks associated with e-bike use.

At NFP, we recommend purchasing a policy specifically designed to insure e-bikes and motorized scooters. We work with our carrier partners to secure e-bike and e-scooter coverage and help clients understand their existing policy coverage limits. As with any policy, you should look at how motorized vehicles are defined on your policies.

Owning and operating an e-bike for short commutes or pleasure is a commitment to being responsible for any injury or damage. We at NFP can help guide you through the selection process and help you obtain the right coverage. With proper coverage in place, you can enjoy the ride.

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