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E-bike safety the focus for National Bike Safety Month

SANTA ANA, Ca. (May 11, 2023): In recognition of National Bike Safety Month, the Orange County Sheriff's Department, the Orange County Fire Authority and Providence Mission Hospital are partnering to launch a public safety campaign focused on e-bike education, safety and enforcement.

"While in recent years we have dedicated resources to improving e-bike safety in our communities, we recognize the need for ongoing education and partnership to reach more families," said Don Barnes, Orange County Sheriff-Coroner. "In the coming months, our community can expect to see more information and enforcement and we hope this will create safer riders on our streets."

In 2022, e-bike crashes were the leading cause of trauma injuries for children under the age of 18 at Mission Hospital with 105 patients admitted to the emergency room. Fourteen of those minors sustained severe or critical injuries.

"Since the start of the pandemic, Mission Hospital has seen a staggering increase in the number of trauma-level injuries related to e-bikes," shares Providence Mission Hospital Trauma Medical Director, Dr. Tetsuya Takeuchi. "And sadly, many of these patients continue to struggle with headaches, extreme fatigue and sleep disorders for months following the accident."

Last year, the Orange County Sheriff's Department responded to more than 80 collisions involving e-bikes. Deputies also impounded more than 30 motorized bicycles for riders who did not have the proper licensing and registration.

"We hope to educate the public on the difference between e-bikes and motorized bicycles, which is a big issue we are seeing on the road," Sheriff Barnes said. "Motorized bicycles look similar to e-bikes, but they go much faster and require a driver's license, license plate and registration to ride."

The Orange County Fire Authority also is seeing an uptick in calls for service related to e-bikes, which aligns with national trends.

"The emergence of e-bikes has created two, ever-increasing issues in our communities – injuries and from accidents, and structure fires caused by the lithium-ion batteries that power the bikes," said Brian Fennessy, Fire Chief of the Orange County Fire Authority. "Safety education is key to preventing and minimizing these incidents, and we are proud to join our partners at the Orange County Sheriff's Department and Providence Mission Hospital in this important work."





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The e-bike safety campaign will include multiple public service announcements targeting the most concerning behaviors first responders see on the roads including distracted riding, reckless riding and disregard for traffic laws.

Ongoing messaging on social media and printed materials distributed to local schools will also support the campaign. Materials will focus on a variety of safety messages such as how to properly store and charge an e-bicycle to limit fire hazards and understanding the different types of e-bikes and their unique safety considerations.

Specialized enforcement and bicycle safety-focused educational events throughout Orange County will round out these ongoing efforts to bolster e-bike safety. Follow **@ocsheriff** and **@ocfireauthority** to stay up to date on the latest e-bike safety information.

Note: Attached are examples of public safety messaging that will be shared with the community. To view the first Public Service Announcement in the series, visit OC Sheriff on YouTube.

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