



The Dangers of eScooters and eBikes

Extra care needs taking with eScooters and eBikes

What with the prospect of electric vehicles replacing the old fossil-fuel types of transport, battery-powered seems to be the next logical step to a cleaner planet. And well it may be, once they iron out all of the associated problems; but that's a subject I'll cover at a later date. For now, I am more concerned with a fad that is spreading fast and wide; and in some instances is costing money, not to mention putting lives at risk.

I am talking about eScooters and eBikes. They are certainly a fun way to get around, convenient too; and, I would imagine, can be money-savers for some. In the past it was not uncommon to see couriers on push-bikes pedaling around the city delivering letters and packages. There were no fuel costs and they were less affected by traffic jams so could do the job quicker. Now we have the electrically-propelled versions which are faster and riders don't have to expend physical energy – they just hop on and away they go.

Aside from business, they also play a role in ordinary family life. Not requiring a licence, even children can ride them, making the trip to and from school a breeze; and they add a new dimension to recreational activities. There are rules, of course. While riding them, helmets have to be worn; and care must be taken regarding other road users and pedestrians. There is also a maximum speed limit imposed, plus restrictions on where they can be ridden. These would seem to be reasonable stipulations which don't detract from the pleasurable use of electric scooters and bikes. Unfortunately, there are some who dislike rules and go out of their way to flout them.

As far as I am aware, all of these forms of personal transport are equipped with a governor of some kind which prevents them from exceeding a set maximum speed. That's quite acceptable to normal, law-abiding people; for the irresponsible bozos, however, any law is merely there to ignore. They know a way to bypass the governor; or if they don't know how themselves, they know someone who does. The result is a few crazies zooming around cities and suburbs at ridiculously high speeds putting lives including their own in danger. One complete idiot was clocked on a major highway doing 110 kph on an eScooter! I believe he was wearing a helmet; although that was probably totally self-centred because he didn't want to damage his tiny mind if he came off.

What, though, does this really have to do with money matters? Well, there's the price of the units in the first place; but there can be a far greater cost to consider. There have been serious issues regarding the lithium batteries which power eScooters and eBikes. Being rechargeable by simply plugging into any household electrical system, that side of it is pretty cheap. The trouble arises, initially anyway, from buying the less expensive ones. Presumably they satisfy safety standards; but some have proved very unsafe, whether on

charge, or even when not. In Australia, an alarming spate of cases has been reported – well over 60 in the first three months of 2024 – when the lithium batteries have exploded. This number refers not merely to eScooters going bang: these explosions created a fire that spread to a property which was destroyed as a consequence.

Each time a similar report goes to air, there is usually a warning or two. Units should only be plugged in using the charger recommended for that make and model; not one from another kind. They should be charged away from buildings and anything flammable. Even done in a garage, especially one attached to the main dwelling can be a risk, as a few have discovered when a unit exploded and the resultant fire spread to the house. I recall an instance which was actually captured on someone's phone when three eScooters propped against an outside wall spontaneously blew up spraying showers of molten stuff like napalm into the air. These weren't being charged – they were just sitting there! Another more recent case involved a kid riding an eScooter which started smoking. Luckily, his dad was on hand to drag him off before the thing burst into flames.

So, for your own and everyone else's safety, if you want to get an eScooter or eBike, please resist the urge to buy a cheap one, because it may not turn out to be all that cheerful. Always observe the safety rules. Never re-charge units in the house. Only use the charger that is recommended for that specific unit. And PARTICULARLY, never leave a unit on charge for any longer than necessary, certainly not overnight.

They are undoubtedly fun to use; but occasionally they may come at a cost much higher than you are prepared to pay.

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