E-Bike vs. E-Motorcycle in California

E-Bike (Electric Bicycle) CVC 312.5

Definition: Bicycle with fully operable pedals, an electric motor under 750W, and motor stops at specified speed.

Classes:

- Class 1: Pedal-assist only, motor cuts at 20 mph.
- Class 2: Pedal-assist + throttle, stops at 20 mph.
- Class 3: Pedal-assist only, up to 28 mph. Riders **must be 16+**, wear a helmet, and no passengers.

Regulations:

- No license, registration, or insurance needed.
- Treated like bicycles; allowed in bike lanes/paths (local restrictions may apply).
- Helmet required if under 18 or riding Class 3.

E-Motorcycle / Motorized Bicycle / Moped

Definition:

- Motorized bicycle/moped: may have pedals, motor 4 bhp, top speed 30 mph.
- Motor-driven cycle: 150 cc engine; requires motorcycle license.
- Off-highway electric motorcycles (e.g., Sur-Ron) are off-road only.

Requirements:

- Must be registered with DMV.
- Needs M1/M2 license, insurance, and license plate.
- CANNOT use bike lanes or bike-only paths.

E-Bike vs. E-Motorcycle in California

Side-by-Side Comparison

Feature	E-Bike	E-Motorcycle / Moped
Pedals	Yes	May or may not
Motor power	< 750 W	Up to 4 bhp (~3kW)
Top assisted speed	20-28 mph	Up to 30+ mph
License needed	No	Yes, M1/M2
Registration & Insurance	No	Yes
Road Access	Bike lanes/paths (some limits)	Roads only

Tips to Stay Legal

- Check for manufacturer label showing class, top speed, and wattage.
- Do not modify speed or wattage it's illegal.
- Off-road vehicles like Sur-Ron and Talaria cannot be ridden on public roads.
- Consult DMV or CHP when in doubt.

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