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News Release

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Urgent Safety Alert for Electric Bikes and Scooters

The St. Charles Parish Sheriff's Office is issuing an urgent safety alert following an increase in complaints and incidents involving children and teenagers operating electric scooters and electric bicycles on roadways and in neighborhoods.

Although Santa Clause delivered many of these for Christmas to children of St. Charles Parish, electric scooters and e-bikes are not toys. These devices can reach high speeds and place young riders at serious risk of injury or death when used improperly. Too often, children and teenagers are observed riding without helmets, ignoring traffic laws, weaving into roadways, and operating these devices without adult supervision.

Since Christmas the Sheriff's Office has received numerous calls of complaints of near-miss incidents involving scooters and/or electric bikes. Some of these complaints include children zooming past families at a high rate of speed who are walking on the levee or in parks almost striking the individuals. Often pedestrians do not even hear them coming which can result in an accident causing serious injury or even death to both the pedestrian and the operator of the scooter or electric bike. If your child is riding an electric scooter or e-bike, you are responsible for ensuring they understand and follow safety rules. A moment of inattention or poor decision-making can result in life-altering consequences.

Parents and Guardians:

- Know where your child is riding. Electric scooters that exceed 20 mph are PROHIBITED and should not be operated on any sidewalk, bike path, or low traffic neighborhoods.
- Ensure they wear a helmet and appropriate safety gear Any operator of an electric low-speed scooter under the age of seventeen years shall wear an approved helmet as provided in R.S. 32:199.
- Do not allow children to ride in traffic or at night
- Make sure they understand traffic laws and pedestrian safety. Riders should ride in the same direction as traffic when in bike lanes.
- Never ride distracted or with headphones

Operating an electric low-speed scooter at speeds exceeding 20 miles per hour is prohibited under Louisiana law. Violations may result in penalties under general traffic laws or the reckless operation statute, depending on the circumstances. Penalties for a first offense may include fines of up to \$200 or imprisonment for up to 90 days, with increased penalties for subsequent offenses. Operators of electric low-speed scooters are subject to the same traffic regulations as motor vehicle drivers, further reinforcing the prohibition on excessive speeds.

This is a preventable issue, and safety starts at home. The St. Charles Parish Sheriff's Office asks parents, youth, and drivers to work together to prevent serious injuries and tragedies before they occur.