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Mini Motorbike Safety

This information sheet is intended for parents who are considering buying a powered ‘toy’ for their children, in particular: mini motorbikes, go-peds, monkey bikes, quad bikes and similar off road vehicles. The document offers simple advice and outlines factors to take into consideration before, during and after purchase.

Mini motorbikes, quad bikes and powered scooters are known as ‘mini motos’ or ‘go peds’. They can be bought for as little as £150. Many of these machines are very powerful capable of travelling in excess of 40 mph and some can reach 60 mph.

Under pressure parents buying mini motos will not always be aware that they may be encouraging their children to break the law and putting them at risk of severe injury. Many of the mini motorbikes on sale are marketed as toys, however machines with electric or petrol motors are classed as motor vehicles.

Safety Issues

There have been at least seven fatalities involving mini motorbikes since September 2004. There are no national figures for injuries caused as a result of mini motorbike use. However, of the seven recent fatalities:

- Five involved children under 15 years of age
- Six occurred whilst on the road
- One included young children riding as passengers on the vehicle

RoSPA is concerned that the lack of suitable recognised places to ride and irresponsible selling will lead to parents allowing children to ride on pavements and roads, public parks or on open and unused land; which is potentially illegal and dangerous to both riders and other users. We are also concerned about riders using these machines without protective equipment - especially a motorbike crash helmet.

The problem has become greater with an estimated ten-fold increase in sales since 2002, primarily due to their low cost and the ability to buy online. The influx of lower quality cheap machines and little emphasis on safety precautions from these suppliers has added to the problem.



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Legal Issues

Many Local Government and Police authorities have become increasingly concerned over the misuse of mini motos and other small powered vehicles. The Home Office has recently launched an initiative targeting the misuse of mini motorbikes - specifically seizing and crushing illegally ridden machines.

Off Road - The only place it is legal to ride off road on a mini motorbike is on private land with the landowner's permission. There have been cases where the landowner has been prosecuted following motorbike accidents on their sites, even when they had not given permission to ride.

On Road - Any powered vehicle used on the public highway must comply with all aspects of road traffic law. In order to be able to ride legally on road, the rider must have, or comply with the all the following:

- Minimum of 16 years of age
- Wear an approved crash helmet
- Have a valid driving licence
- Road Tax
- Insurance
- Vehicle registration
- MOT certificate
- European Community Whole Type Approval or Motorcycle Single Vehicle Approval

Information for Parents

RoSPA believe that many potential incidents can be avoided if mini motorbikes are used in a managed environment, with appropriate safety equipment and training such as that promoted by the Auto Cycle Union (ACU). What follows is some simple advice if you are considering purchasing a mini motorbike:

Before Purchase:

- Check there are local safe and legal riding sites
- Budget for the cost of appropriate safety equipment and rider training
- Work out how the mini moto will be transported to and from safe sites
- Establish how you can control use of the bike when it is not supervised
- Check for a local reputable dealer



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During Purchase:

- Check if the bike is limited to 50cc
- Ask the dealer about local sites and clubs or opportunities for under 16's to ride
- Check for appropriate (ideally CE marked) and well fitting helmets, gloves, boots and leathers.
- Ask what maintenance support, and guidance is available from your dealer network

After Purchase:

- Ensure use of the mini moto is supervised at all times
- Join the ACU or member club
- Get some training
- Ride the machine in the right place, with supervision and with safety equipment.

Other Information

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents is a registered charity, which was established nearly 90 years ago. RoSPA's mission is to enhance the quality of life by exercising a powerful influence for accident prevention. More information can be found on www.rospa.com or by email at help@rospa.com

Useful Links

RoSPA's road safety department www.rospa.com/roadsafety/index.htm

The Autocycle Union (ACU) is the governing body of motorcycle sport throughout Britain. www.acu.org.uk.

Department for Transport information on miniature motor powered vehicles and the law: www.dft.gov.uk/stellent/groups/dft_rdsafety/documents/pdf/dft_rdsafety_pdf_039126.pdf

The Highway Code is essential reading for everyone www.highwaycode.gov.uk.

Home Office information on mini motorbike misuse: www.together.gov.uk/article.asp?c=107&aid=3807

THINK! – Road Safety www.thinkroadsafety.gov.uk/advice/motorcycling01.htm.

Department for the Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DeFRA) guidance note on acceptable use of vehicles in the countryside www.defra.gov.uk

Sport England lists clubs and facilities where you can take your child to take part in sport. More information can be found at www.sportengland.org

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents

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