

# Electric scooter accidents in Japan surge after rules eased

April 30, 2024 @ 2:03am



Electric scooters under the new rules must measure 190 centimeters or less in length and 60 cm or less in width, with green lights at the front and back. -- Pexels photo

Bernamea-Kyodo

OSAKA: The average number of monthly accidents involving electric scooters has shown a six-fold rise in Japan after the country started allowing users to ride the vehicles without a driver's license in July 2023, recent data by the National Police Agency showed.

Traffic experts have warned of the risks of fatal accidents as the number of scooter users increases, and public awareness regarding the traffic rules associated with this relatively new form of transport seems to be low, Kyodo news agency reported.

Over the six months from July, 85 traffic accidents involving electric scooters resulted in 86 injuries. This nearly matched the total accidents recorded over three years and five months since comparable data became available in January 2020, which stood at 88 accidents and 91 injuries.

Under the revised road traffic law, users of electric scooters with a maximum speed of 20 kilometers per hour are not required to have a driver's license, though minors under 16 are banned from riding them.

Electric scooters under the new rules must measure 190 centimeters or less in length and 60 cm or less in width, with green lights at the front and back. They are primarily for road use but can also be used on sidewalks at speeds of 6 kph or less with flashing green lights.

Meanwhile, there seems to be a growing trend of people using the two-wheeled vehicles, with Luup Inc., a Tokyo company offering an electric bike and scooter sharing service, seeing a two to threefold increase in the monthly download rate of its app compared to before the rules were eased, according to an official.

Luup had rental kiosks in 10 prefectures as of the end of March.

Takeru Shibayama, a senior scientist at the Vienna University of Technology's Institute for Transportation, highlighted the need for traffic education, particularly for young users.

"Since the vehicles run quietly, there is a risk of colliding with pedestrians...and if severely hit, it could be fatal. It is important to enforce road laws and steadily work to enhance traffic education at schools and elsewhere," Shibayama said.

Previously, electric scooters were classified the same as mopeds with engine displacements under 50 cubic centimeters and required riders to hold a driver's license, wear a helmet and have the vehicle registered with a license plate.

Those vehicles falling under the new regulations are now classified as designated small motorized bicycles. – BERNAMA-KYODO