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## Fire safety precautions in NY e-bike shops would be required under proposed bill

By Tim Balk New York Daily News (TNS)

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Charred remains of e-bikes and scooters sit outside of a building in Chinatown after four people were killed by a fire in an e-bike repair shop overnight on June 20, 2023, in New York City.

Tribune News Service

Shops in New York State that peddle e-bikes would be required to implement enhanced fire safety precautions under a newly introduced bill in Albany aimed at curbing New York City's e-bike fire crisis.

The legislation, which would mandate automatic fire monitoring and Class B extinguishers in e-bike shops, is part of a package of e-bike safety bills proposed by state Sen. Iwen Chu, a Dyker Heights, Brooklyn, Democrat. Another bill would set new standards for e-bike batteries.

"There is an urgency here," Chu said in an interview. "We're working to save lives."

Since New York City lifted its e-bike ban in 2018, the devices have proliferated across the city, posing a growing safety challenge. E-bikes are powered by flammable lithium-ion batteries that can spark fast-moving infernos.

Overall this year, the city Fire Department had recorded 243 fires, 124 injuries and 17 deaths related to lithium-ion batteries through last Monday.

In June, four people perished in an early morning fire that billowed from an e-bike repair store on Madison St. in Manhattan's Chinatown.

Fire officials determined that a lithium-ion battery for an e-bike generated the blaze. The shop had previously been flagged for violations.

And this month, an e-bike blaze ripped through a brownstone in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, killing three people. The fire was attributed to a lithium-ion battery.

Officials have grasped for solutions to reduce the risks, increasing enforcement efforts against sketchy bike stores that recklessly handle the batteries, pushing for new product safety standards and passing measures prohibiting sales of uncertified bikes and batteries.

Chu's legislative package would also require testing and certification for batteries used in e-bikes and e-scooters in New York State, building on city legislation. And it would force retailers to plaster notices on e-bikes reminding their users that they cannot ride on sidewalks.

E-bikes and e-scooters riding down congested sidewalks make for a frequent but frustrating presence across the city. Chu said her constituents often complain about the issue in her Brooklyn district.

The senator said she hopes to pass her bills in the next legislative session, which begins this winter. Her legislative push joins an ongoing effort in the City Council to force delivery apps to cover the costs of safe, certified e-bikes or other electric transport devices for their city workers.

"We're still discussing the specifics of the bill, and are hoping to get it to the finish line very soon," City Councilman Oswald Feliz, the Bronx Democrat who introduced the Council proposal, said in a text Friday. "Everyone must play a role in resolving the fire safety challenges we're seeing."

And in Washington, Rep. Ritchie Torres, a Bronx Democrat, and Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, an Albany Democrat, introduced bipartisan legislation this year to stiffen product safety standards for lithium-ion batteries used in e-bikes and e-scooters.

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