

# Hawthorne Press Tribune

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## Hawthorne Hiring Event Helps Laid Off Workers Find New Jobs



An aerospace/manufacturing hiring event took place on Jan. 31 at the Hawthorne Memorial Center to assist recently laid-off workers. Attendees networked with employers and gathered important information to take their next employment steps. Photo Courtesy of South Bay Jobs/South Bay One Stop.

## Crash Danger Predictions from Electric Scooters Coming True

By Rob McCarthy

To no one's surprise, electric scooters that showed up last year in South Bay cities before being banned are sending people to hospital emergency rooms with an assortment of injuries. And it's not only the riders who get scrapes, bruises and broken bones. The walking wounded include bystanders, too -- some of whom are fighting back against the trendy mode of transportation.

Recent developments have slowed the introduction of the sleek scooters from Bird and Lime into Southern California. More cities have banned them for now, preferring to take a wait-and-see approach to how the Santa Monica experiment works. That South Bay city is the testing ground for what happens when a new motoring technology that offers little protection for riders merges into urban traffic. The introduction has come with some bumps and bruises, but no traffic deaths.

Nine people who were injured by electric scooters filed a class-action suit last October in Los Angeles County Superior Court. It accuses startups Bird and Lime — as well as their manufacturers Xiaomi Corp. and Segway Inc. — of gross negligence, claiming the companies knew the scooters were dangerous and deployed them in a way that was certain to cause injuries.

Two of the plaintiffs were injured by tripping over scooters left on the sidewalk, according to the lawsuit. Four were hit from behind as they walked, including a 7-year-old boy whose teeth were broken by the force of the collision, the suit alleges. Another 75 people reportedly have contacted the law firm about injuries caused by electric scooters. One man said he suffered a brain injury.

Bird and Lime argue that vehicles are the real problem. However, a growing number of

cities disagree. They've banned the vehicles with emergency ordinances or restricted where scooters can be left. Pedestrian injuries from tripping over the scooters is a concern cited by the cities that have told Bird and Lime to remove their fleets of two-wheelers until further notice.

Electric scooters -- with their risks to riders and pedestrians -- came on the scene last September, and yet already have been labeled one of the "polarizing technologies" in transportation in decades. The electric-driven scooters can reach top speeds of 15 to 20 mph, and they are to be ridden in the street and not on sidewalks. Helmets aren't provided by Lime and Bird, and not surprisingly riders who crash are susceptible to head injuries, according to a first-of-its kind analysis by UCLA doctors.

Fractures and head injuries are commonly the outcome when a scooter collides with a vehicle or the pavement. That's the initial finding by UCLA researchers after studying 249 injury cases involving the two-wheelers. Santa Monica is the only South Bay city that currently allows Bird and Lime to operate in its boundaries. Riders unlock the scooters with a smartphone and ride for 15 cents per minute.

Nine in 10 of the injuries were to riders, though the danger of tripping over a scooter left on the sidewalk adds to the body count in emergency rooms, the data showed. The riders, who often are inexperienced at operating the scooters and lack helmets, most often get hurt because they fall. Potholes and uneven pavement after weeks of rainstorms will only make the streets more treacherous ahead of spring break, when college students descend on warm-weather cities, too.

The UCLA research team did some firsthand observation of scooter traffic in Santa Monica

and reported that riders weren't wearing helmets 93 percent of the time. Protection against head injuries is clearly needed if the personal transportation device offered by Bird and Lime is going to coexist with vehicle traffic. The 249 injury cases present a small sample, yet the plastic surgeons at one Santa Monica emergency room have seen what happens when a rider is thrown to the pavement.

One-third of those patients were taken to UCLA hospitals in Santa Monica or Westwood in an ambulance over a one-year period that lasted through September last year. The work done at UCLA is a foray into a public health issue that hasn't been analyzed and reported until now.

One of the typical scooter-related injuries to the head is not a pretty sight, according to Dr. Wally Ghurabi, medical director of one of the emergency departments at UCLA Medical Center in Santa Monica. His surgeons have spent hours picking asphalt out of facial wounds. "You can break your face, break your nose, break your facial bones, break your skull and bleed inside your skull," Ghurabi warns about the demonstrated risks to riders.

Patients who made emergency-room visits or were treated for scooter crashes had a huge number of head injuries, in the UCLA analysis. Head trauma put 40 percent of those patients in the ER. The main cause of those injuries was a fall. In 80 percent of the reported cases, the rider tumbled and sustained some injury. Physicians saw plenty of bruises, scrapes and broken bones after Bird and Lime showed up in the South Bay last year.

Riders run into objects or collide with vehicles at a much smaller rate, about 10 percent, based on the Santa Monica sample.

See **Electric Scooters**, page 8

## Weekend Forecast

**Friday**  
Sunny  
61°/48°



**Saturday**  
Partly  
Cloudy  
58°/49°



**Sunday**  
Mostly  
Sunny  
58°/47°

