

Colleges tell students to leave their hoverboards at home

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In this Oct. 5, 2015 file photo, Seattle Seahawks wide receiver B.J. Daniels rides through a hallway at CenturyLink Field on an electric self-balancing scooter commonly called a "hoverboard," as he arrives for an NFL football game against the Detroit Lions in Seattle. Since December 2015, several universities have banned or limited hoverboards on their campuses, saying the two-wheeled, motorized scooters are unsafe. Beyond the risk of falls and collisions, colleges are citing warnings from federal authorities that some of the self-balancing gadgets have caught on fire. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson, File)

One of the holiday's hottest presents is now considered contraband at

many U.S. colleges.

More than 30 universities have banned or restricted hoverboards on their campuses in recent weeks, saying the two-wheeled, motorized scooters are unsafe. Beyond the risk of falls and collisions, colleges are citing warnings from federal authorities that some of the self-balancing gadgets have caught on fire.

"It's clear that these things are potentially dangerous," said Len Dolan, managing director of fire safety at Kean University in Union, New Jersey. The public school of 14,000 students issued a campus-wide ban effective on Monday, telling students in an email that any hoverboards found on campus would be confiscated.

"These things are just catching fire without warning, and we don't want that in any of our dorms," Dolan said.

Outright bans also have been issued at schools such as American University and George Washington University, both in Washington, D.C. Other schools said they will forbid the scooters in dorm rooms or campus buildings, a policy adopted at colleges including Louisiana State University, the University of Iowa and the University of Arkansas.

After banning hoverboards from dorms in December, officials at the University of Hartford in Connecticut are now considering a full ban because of concerns over how to store them safely, said David Isgu, a school spokesman. Some of the reported fires have occurred while the boards were being charged, authorities say.

At Ohio State University and at Xavier University in Cincinnati, students were told they can bring a hoverboard only if it came with a seal showing that the board meets certain safety standards.

Schools have issued bans as recently as Thursday, when the University of Connecticut announced that the devices aren't welcome on campus. The University of Alabama and the University of Kentucky declared bans on Wednesday as students prepare to return from break.

"We are not willing to risk your safety and our community's safety," University of Kentucky Fire Marshal Greg Williamson told students in a statement.

Bryce Colegrove, a sophomore at Shawnee State University in Ohio, got an email from his school on Tuesday telling students to leave their hoverboards at home after the holidays. It was bad timing for Colegrove, who had just received one as a gift from his girlfriend and had even plotted his new routes to class.

"Honestly I was really disappointed," said Colegrove, 20. "I don't think it's right to ban them. I mean, it's a college campus; it's not a high school."

Others took to social media to voice their frustration, with some saying they planned to bring their scooters to school anyway.

Hoverboards, which are made by several brands, already have been banned by the three largest U.S. airlines, citing potential fire danger from the lithium-ion batteries that power them.

The devices also are prohibited on New York City streets, and a new law in California requires riders to be at least 16 and wear a helmet in public.

On Monday, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission reported that it's now investigating 28 fires in 19 states tied to the motorized scooters. Fire officials from New Jersey to California have blamed the boards for fires that damaged homes. The federal commission also said

there have been serious injuries caused by falls.

Colleges reported that even though the gadget has been gaining popularity, it's still relatively rare on campuses.

Dolan, of Kean University, said he saw about six students riding the scooters last fall. News of swift sales over the holidays, plus the reports of fires, led him to propose the ban.

"If that may inconvenience a couple dozen [students](#), then that's what it's going to have to be," he said.

Fire officials in several states have issued their own warnings about the devices, including in New Jersey, where authorities recommended that all public colleges ban them.

Still, several colleges have suggested that they may allow hoverboards in the future. American University said its ban is temporary, but will last "until further notice." At Wellesley College near Boston, a policy bans the motorized scooters "until safety standards can be developed and implemented by the manufacturers."

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