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UL publishes new standard for e-bikes, Panasonic is on board

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by Dean Yobbi

OTTAWA, Ontario (BRAIN) — Underwriters Laboratories has published a new standard for e-bike systems and certification of the bikes' electrical components.

The new standard, UL 2849 and dated Jan. 2, focuses on pedal-assist and non-pedal-assist e-bikes' electrical systems and battery chargers to address specific issues related to those types of products, including mechanical, electrical and functional safety.

The UL's previous standard focused on electronic systems for multiple e-mobility product types, like e-scooters and e-motorcycles. UL is a global safety certification company based in Northbrook, Ill. In 2012, it went from a nonprofit to a for-profit company. UL standards are voluntary, but in some industries, manufacturers will only buy electrical components that pass UL certification.

Panasonic, part of a UL Standards Technical Panel to develop the new standard, claims it offers the first e-bike system in North America to receive the certification. It announced the certification ahead of the 2020 Consumer Electronics Show held last week in Las Vegas.

Panasonic used the new standard as an opportunity to get on the CES news cycle, but all e-bike suppliers should be aware of the new standard, said Michael Baker, marketing director of ACT Lab, an independent third-party accredited consumer product testing laboratory that worked on the technical panel.

"This is a new published standard," Baker said. "That's the news, not so much who was first to claim it. We're letting our customers know that it has been published and to be aware of it."

Baker said the onus will be on suppliers to make sure their e-bike electrical systems meet the new standard. More importantly, he said, companies developing unique proprietary systems will need to

meet the new requirements.

Larry Pizzi, who chairs the PeopleForBikes' e-bike committee and is chief commercial officer for Alta Cycling Group, said the new standard has been in development for several years, with a PeopleForBikes' sub-committee involved in the past year.

"My understanding is that Bosch met the standard requirements when a draft of UL 2849 was first published in 2018," Pizzi said. "Panasonic, along with a number of other industry players — Bosch, Trek, QBP, SRAM — were part of the standards committee that was refining and voted on the final standard that was just moved to publish status. Surprising timing, but I'm sure (Panasonic) wanted something to talk about at CES."



A new Underwriters Laboratories standard was published for e-bike systems.