

Safety concerns hover over students

New tech items reach greater heights

BY NOLAN DAVIS
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Hoverboards and drones, this year's top Christmas gifts, have become a top safety concern for teenagers and adults alike. To combat safety concerns, laws and rule changes have been made for these items.

Hoverboards are two-wheeled devices that are stood on to ride, made by a number of companies and ranging in price from \$250 to \$500. Controversy surrounds the machines because officials don't know if the hoverboards should be considered a registered vehicle or not.

A new California law states that a hoverboard rider must be 16 years or older, must wear a helmet, and can only drive on streets where the speed limit is under 35 mph.

Hoverboards have also recently been banned from New York City streets since they are motor vehicles that cannot be registered by the Department of Motor Vehicles.

Drones, another popular item this Christmas, are flown remotely and sometimes have a camera mounted onto them. Since they can fly anywhere, drones have received restrictions for their owners.

The Federal Aviation Administration has received a list of all U.S. owners of remote-controlled devices to be registered. Near crashes between drones and aircraft, such as passenger planes, has become a major concern now that drones are widely available. Restrictions for the drones include only flying below 400 feet, steering clear of and not interfering with manned aircraft missions, not flying within five miles of an airport unless specific permission is obtained from the airport, and not flying near people or stadiums.

Hoverboards have become very popular lately.

"I don't have a hoverboard,"

sophomore Chase Hill said. "One of my friends got one for Christmas though, and I go to his house and we ride it frequently."

Hoverboards have become well-known around the world because many videos of hoverboards have been posted on social media.

"I've learned about hoverboards because I saw them on social media," freshman Cutter Edgar said. "I thought they were cool, so I got one for Christmas."

Hoverboards can be hard to ride since there are no handlebars.

"When I first got on my hoverboard, it took me a while to figure it out," Edgar said. "Now that I have ridden it a lot, I am a master."

Hoverboards are also tough to balance on, according to Hill.

"The hoverboard I rode was tricky to figure out at first," Hill said. "I had to hold onto someone or something at first so I wouldn't fall. I never fell off of the board, but I ran into things."

Even with new laws in place regarding hoverboards, their popularity continues to soar.

"I think that hoverboards are getting so popular now because people think that they look cool when they ride them around," Hill said. "Once you get the hang of riding them, they are also just fun and easy to ride."

Riding the boards can bring a feeling of elation, according to Edgar.

"When I ride my hoverboard, I feel like I'm on top of the world," Edgar said. "It makes me feel like I'm flying."

One disadvantage about hoverboards is that there is not always a good place or time to ride.

"I normally ride my friend's hoverboard when I am hanging out with my friends," Hill said. "I have ridden it many times."

Riding hoverboards can also be relaxing.

"When I'm stressed or trying to think, I ride my hoverboard," Edgar said.

As hoverboards become more popular, many wonder if everyone will have them in the near future.

"I don't think that everyone in



Freshman Cutter Edgar (top) rides past a group of friends on his hover board during the tutorial period. Some laws have been made prohibiting children under the age of 16 to operate the boards. Senior Drew Neece (above) flies his drone in his living room. Neece received his drone as a Christmas gift. PHOTOS BY NOLAN DAVIS

Albany will get a hoverboard," Hill said. "In Albany the roads are bumpy, so there's not really any good places to ride."

Other people feel differently. "I think that everyone in the world will have hoverboards," Edgar said. "They are so much fun to ride that most people will want them."

Even though it is a law in some states, all hoverboard riders don't always wear helmets when riding.

"I'm not going to wear a helmet," Hill said. "I would look dumb and my friends would make fun of me."

Others rely on their riding ability to protect them.

"I'm good at riding my hoverboard, so I don't really think that I need a helmet," Edgar said.

Instead of hovering on land, other students are taking to the skies.

"I got a drone for Christmas," senior Drew Neece said. "It can fly and take pictures with a camera that is attached to it."

Drones can be used for photography or just having fun, but they can also be used for surveying land and science experiments.

"I just use my drone to fly around and have fun," Neece said.

Drones don't have to be flown outdoors.

"I flew my drone in my house, and it was pretty cool," Neece said.

While fun, drones can be unpredictable.

"When I first got my drone," Neece said, "I immediately flew it into a tree. So there is a learning curve."

At school, hoverboards are not allowed to be ridden inside the school or on school grounds. Students can ride them to school and ride them back home, but that is all.

Drones are not allowed unless a student has permission to fly one for educational benefit.