

How pedelec dealers can keep customers off of the TV news



This is what happens when pedelec batteries go bad, which is why retailers need to know how to properly store and charge them.

When it comes to e-bikes and pedelecs, you might think that the only good news for TV or newspaper reporters is bad news.

The press has reported on pedelec riders who knock down pedestrians or hit cars at full speed, and on a bicycle expert who says 80 percent of pedelecs shouldn't be on the

market. Then there are the stories about exploding e-bike batteries that burn down bike stores, or send cyclists flying through the air and suffering serious injuries.

While there is often some truth to these stories, the media tends to report them out of context. Dealers and manufacturers must

react professionally to ensure these reports don't create uncertainty among users and potential buyers.

Are there problems with pedelecs? Of course, just as with any new product category. Rechargeable batteries have an enormous energy density, which makes them hazardous. Yet users want even bigger batteries for even greater range.

An electric motor can induce a kind of "driving euphoria" among pedelec owners, not all of whom can properly control their vehicles.

Finally, the relatively heavy motors and batteries stress a basic bicycle frame, yet riders may not account properly for the different characteristics of a pedelec compared with a standard bike.

Retailers can make a big difference in ensuring their customers don't end up on the TV news. They can carefully choose the brands they carry through reviewing test results in serious magazines and by test-driving every system first-hand.

When choosing a brand, retailers should consider the service package offered by the manufacturer. Is training available for the staff? What special tools, diagnostics equipment or software are required? And, last but not least: Does the manufacturer

supply easy-to-understand instructions for consumers, such as tips for charging the battery and storing it in winter?

Retailers must be careful to match the pedelec with the rider. Someone who is pulling a trailer, for example, shouldn't buy a pedelec with a front-mounted motor.

Retailers need to configure their stores to handle pedelecs, especially for storing and charging batteries. That means locations with ventilation, smoke alarms and fire-resistant structures in case a battery or charger overheats. Class D fire extinguishers must be on hand in case of disaster.

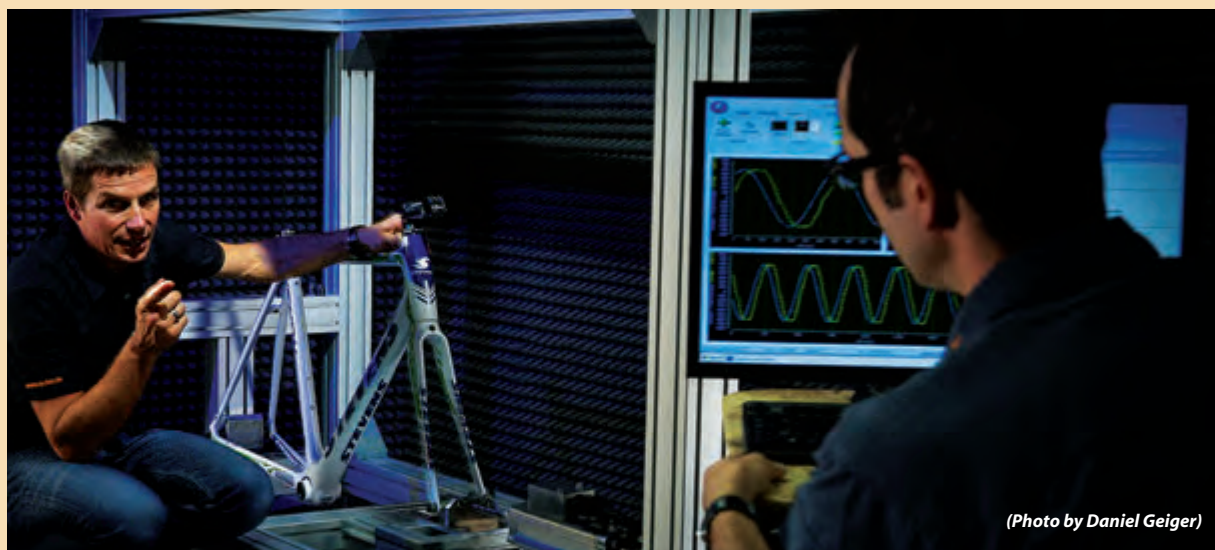
Retailers must be equipped to accept old or damaged batteries—one of the weakest parts of the chain, in my experience. Employees need proper training in safely handling and storing old batteries.

Shop employees must also know how to work with software and diagnostic equipment to properly "read" a pedelec's history and to know how to fine-tune the software to match the needs of each customer.

The good news is that customers are willing to pay for professional service. And a professional pedelec retailer can keep its customers from starring in their own bad news stories. ■ — Dirk Zedler

Dirk Zedler, a graduate-level mechanical engineer, is managing director of Zedler-Institut für Fahrradtechnik und -Sicherheit GmbH. For 19 years, he's conducted research and development in the bike industry and is recognized as an expert witness. He works with the industry and with universities to develop test criteria and test stands. In 1996, his company created, wrote and photographed a trend-setting user manual. Today, the Zedler-Institut supplies several companies with user manuals in as many as 25 languages. Pedelecs are a specialty. For more information visit www.zedler.de

Dirk Zedler (left) with one of his engineers in his lab in Ludwigsburg, Germany.



(Photo by Daniel Geiger)



THRUST SL

First of its kind, the traditional retention spring is replaced by using MDU (Microcellular Ductile Urethane) elastomers to provide solid cleat entry and smooth disengagement. This unique MDU retention system provides a more consistent resistance between the rear claw and cleat preventing any unwanted disengagement during hard efforts and sprint applications.



164g per set

BOOTH#: B2-501

SERVICE@XPEDO.COM WWW.XPEDO.COM

xpedo