

Child's death prompts better supervision of shared bikes



Rental bikes on the street. [Photo by Guo Yiming/China.org.cn]

Supervisors and law experts have called for better supervision on shared bikes and more parental guidance for children following the death of a child riding a shared bike in Shanghai.

On Sunday, an elementary school boy, riding an Ofo shared bike, died after being hit by a bus in Shanghai.

Ofo issued a statement on Tuesday pledging to assist the police investigation related to the death. The company said it is working on an effective prevention mechanism to prevent children under 12 years old from using shared bikes.

Chinese national road safety law requires a person to be 12 years old or older in order to ride a bicycle or tricycle.

However, with a growing number of shared bikes on the streets, children under 12 years old have become frequent users. If a user forgets or fails to lock an Ofo bike after use, for example, it is free for the next user to use, even if the rider has not registered for an account via smart phone.

Guo Jianrong, general secretary of the Shanghai Bicycle Industry Association, said the association has required Ofo to place smart locks on its bikes. Ofo's chief rival, Mobike, uses smart locks that can only be unlocked using a phone.

“Rules need to be established to supervise the use of shared bikes,” said Liu Chunyan, a law expert at Tongji University.

“If an accident happens because of the quality of a bicycle, for example, a brake failure, the company should be held liable. In other cases, the company is not at fault,” Liu said.

Cui Minyan, China division chief of Safe Kids Worldwide, said parents should give more guidance to their children regarding shared bikes.

“Parents may underestimate the danger of road traffic and think their children have good bicycle skills. The absence of guidance may easily lead to tragedies,” Cui said.