

Christmas is a Blast!

**By Reg P. Wydeven
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In 'Back to the Future Part II,' Michael J. Fox resumed his role as lovable, time-traveling Marty McFly. In this chapter of the saga, Marty and Christopher Lloyd's Dr. Emmett Brown travel to the year 2015 to try to prevent Marty's future son from going to prison.

In the film, the future is full of wonder, including flying cars, self-tying shoes and a World Series championship for the Chicago Cubs. The movie also featured hoverboards, or wheel-less skateboards that fly. Well, 2015 has come and gone, and we don't yet have hoverboards (but at least the Cubs didn't win the title either).

While we don't have skateboards that fly, we do have two-wheeled, self-balancing transporters. Resembling a Segway without a handle, these transporters have been dubbed "hoverboards" by the teenagers who are usually seen using them to get from hither to yonder.

Like most American youth, my kids wanted one for Christmas. Like most American parents, we told them no dice. The kids argued that the hoverboards would be great for coming home from school. Much to my chagrin, I found myself yet again quoting my father by responding, "a little walking never killed anyone."

But according to the government, owning one of these hoverboards just might.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) is currently investigating over 30 emergency room visits resulting from hoverboard accidents. The boards operate by the rider pivoting her feet up or down. Because good balance is required, falling off is a common occurrence. In fact, a 15-year-old boy fell off his hoverboard in London and was hit by a bus and killed.

In addition to the injuries caused by falling off the devices, the agency is also looking into nearly a dozen reports of the hoverboards spontaneously combusting. One family in Louisiana lost their home to a fire after a hoverboard exploded while charging. Another family lost their home in Chappaqua, New York, after their Swagway board started on fire. As a result, a class action lawsuit was filed against the company and Modell's, the store that sold the family the board.

The CPSC will release its findings soon and indicated that product recalls are not out of the question.

Also, the U.S. Postal Service just announced its banishment of hoverboards on all airmail flights. Three major airlines, American, Delta and United, have also enacted similar bans on their flights by not allowing hoverboards either in carry-on or checked luggage. They have all come to the conclusion that an onboard hoverboard that starts on fire just might be a safety hazard.

And that's not all. Some major retailers, such as Amazon, Target and Overstock.com, have stopped selling hoverboards due to safety concerns over the volatility of the batteries.

So if you were good this year and got a hoverboard under your Christmas tree, please be careful, because if you aren't, you might not make it back to the future.

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