



### GROUP RIDING TIPS

There are a number of factors that come into play when planning or participating in a group ride. Here are some suggestions for making your rides safe and successful.

#### **PLANNING THE RIDE**

It's always a good idea to prepare a map of the route with all the stops indicated. If some bikes become separated from the group, they can catch up at the next stop.

- If you're not out for a scenic ride, plan the most direct route to an event or activity. Interstate highways offer the following advantages:
  - All traffic is moving in one direction.
  - No cross-traffic or traffic lights to split up your group, if possible.
- When there are three lanes, it is wise to travel in the middle lane. This allows faster traffic to pass and will also allow vehicles to enter/exit the highway more easily.
- If you're out for a scenic ride, be sure traffic conditions will allow it. For example, is there a county fair or car show in the area that day to complicate the ride?
- Plan stops to avoid gravel lots and left-hand turns. No one likes gravel, and in a group, it's even less fun. Right-hand turns in and out of stops will help the group stay together.
- Plan gas stops at least every 90 miles, so folks with smaller tanks can fill up and stay with the group.
- If you have a large group stopping at a restaurant, call the restaurant far enough in advance to allow them to prepare for a large group.
- If you expect a particularly large group and it's possible to get a police escort or traffic control at the start/end of a ride or along the route, great! Otherwise, it is a good idea to at least inform the police department of your plans and perhaps drop off a map. Never block traffic yourself; it may be against the law!



### GROUP RIDING TIPS (cont.)

#### **LEADING THE RIDE**

Choose and maintain a comfortable pace within the speed limit.

- Keep in mind that people at the end of the group may have to ride a little faster to keep up if there are gaps in the group.
- It may also may cause a problem to ride too slowly. Drivers in vehicles behind the group may become impatient and try to get around the group.
- Know the route well enough so that you can give the group plenty of notice that you are approaching a turn.
- Always signal your intention to turn or change lanes. If you find yourself at an intersection too quickly for the entire group to make the turn safely, continue until you locate a place where the entire group can execute the turn safely.

#### **PARTICIPATING IN A RIDE**

Drinking and driving never mix. This is especially true when participating in a group ride.

- Know your state's law for motorcycle group size limits.
- Always ride in staggered formation; it gives you an extra margin for safety.
- Make sure your vehicle is in good operating condition. For example, a bad tire could cause an accident on a group ride.
- Being too hot or too cold can also affect how alert you are as a driver. Be sure to pack appropriate protective clothing, such as a long-sleeve cotton shirt (for protection from the sun), helmet, eye protection, leather jacket, gloves, etc.
- A group of motorcycles is not considered a single vehicle. Be courteous and allow cars to enter and exit the highway and change lanes. Generally speaking, a car will not want to ride in the middle of a group of motorcycles and will get out of the group as quickly as possible.
- Familiarize yourself with the route and scheduled stops.
- Arrive to participate in a group ride with a full tank of gas.



### GROUP RIDING TIPS (cont.)

#### **EMERGENCY STOPPING**

Ride with a partner. In the event someone needs to pull over for an unscheduled stop, the partner should also stop in case assistance is needed.

- It's unsafe for a large group to stop on the side of the road. If someone needs to pull over, the remainder of the group should continue to the next stop. At that time, the group can decide to wait for the missing members or to send two riders back to assist.
- If the group has a standing policy to wait for a specified period of time, say half an hour, the members left behind will be aware that they can catch up.
- All riders should have a map of the route so they can reach their destination on their own if need be.

#### **HAND SIGNALS**

Hand signals should be simple, easy to learn and be kept to a bare minimum.

- Either the rider or passenger can relay the signal. As soon as you see a signal, you should give the same signal so the rider behind you can see it.
- When the phrase "1/3 of the lane" is used, it is referring to riding in the right or left track of the lane.
- These hand signals will not always be used by every group you ride with. The signals assembled here are offered as suggestions only.

#### **"START YOUR ENGINES"**

To indicate that you're ready to go, place your hand (right or left) on top of the windshield. If you don't have a windshield, raise your hand. This tells the leader that your engine is running and you're ready to ride.

#### **SLOW DOWN**

Use either arm, straight down and palm toward the back. Move your arm back and forth at the elbow.

#### **HAZARD ON THE ROAD**

Point with left hand at the object. Sometimes in group riding, the road captain may wave his left arm back and forth above his head to alert the rest of the group. The road captain is the only person who should perform this maneuver.



### GROUP RIDING TIPS (cont.)

#### **NEED GAS**

When you need gas, point at the gas tank.

#### **NEED FOOD**

When you need a food or a break in general, point at your mouth.

#### **TURN SIGNALS**

Most bikes have turn signals – use them. Hand signals used in conjunction with turn signals give everyone in the group and other traffic a clear idea of your intentions.

### FORMATION RIDING

#### **STAGGERED RIDING**

The lead motorcycle should be in the left 1/3 of lane, the second motorcycle should be in the right 1/3 of the lane, one second behind the first rider, and so on.

- Leave enough room between each motorcycle so that any rider can maneuver to the right or left without hitting anyone else.
- Always stay in line with the bike in front of you. Do not switch between the left and right side of the lane.

#### **SINGLE FILE RIDING**

All motorcycles ride in a single line, two seconds behind one another, in either the right or left third of the lane. The lead rider determines on which side of the lane the group will ride.

#### **PASSING**

Passing should always be undertaken one motorcycle at a time, in staggered formation. Remember, passing at any time can be hazardous. Use common sense.



### FORMATION RIDING (cont.)

#### **PASSING OTHER VEHICLES**

- **Pre-pass Position** – Be far enough behind the vehicle you are passing to see clearly down the road to do an “oncoming traffic check.”
- **Signal** – If you have a passenger, he or she should signal as well.
- **Check your Mirrors** – Then turn your head to check your blind spot and ensure that no one is passing you.
- **Accelerate and Change Lanes** – Remember, legally, you can’t exceed the speed limit.
- **When Returning to Your Lane** – Signal and make a mirror check and head check to be sure there is space between you and all other vehicles. Return to your lane and turn off your blinker.

#### **AFTER MAKING THE PASS**

The lead rider makes the lane change, going to the right track, until he can clearly see that the other riders have made their lane changes.

#### **KEEP THE GROUP TOGETHER**

- **Plan** – The leader should look ahead for changes and signal early so “the word gets back” in plenty of time. Start lane changes early to permit everyone to complete the change. Put novice riders or those new to group riding at or near the back unless the riders wish to ride elsewhere.
- **Follow Those Behind** – Let the tailender set the pace. Use your mirrors to keep an eye on the person behind. If a rider falls behind, everyone should slow down a little to stay with the tailender.
- **Know the Route** – Make sure everyone knows the route. Then, if someone is separated they won’t have to hurry to keep from getting lost or taking a wrong turn.