

We look forward to making lots of memories and becoming a laid back group to ride with. Within our group, RIDER SAFETY is our #1 PRIORITY. We hope you will enjoy our group's flexibility, ride style diversity, and rider safety. No matter how experienced the riders are, things go wrong. Inevitably, we will have riders from a wide range of experience and rider styles, so we have decided to put together some documentation that will help us all come to a common understanding of what to expect when you ride with our HRCA Club.

When we climb on a motorcycle, it's important to remember that we are placing ourselves in a high-risk situation. There are many things we can do to help reduce that risk. Since we all choose to undertake this risk to enjoy the ride, it's vital that everyone consider the consequences of his or her actions before you set out to ride with us. Following the rules that we have outlined in this document will help us all have a safe and enjoyable ride. Our Road Captains will keep an eye on the riders throughout the journey and if they feel at any time your riding behavior may cause a safety issue for others in the group, you may be asked to depart from the ride. Should you consume alcohol during the ride at any time you will be required to depart from the ride and your membership with our riders club may be removed immediately, you may be permanently banned from our riders club. THE HRCA has a strict NO ALCOHOL policy and it will be upheld at all times.

In addition to basic riding behaviors, we will take into consideration the group that has assembled for each ride. If you are an inexperienced rider, have any limitations, or are riding on your temp license, you MUST advise our Road Captains BEFORE departing. In order for our group to ensure everyone is comfortable on the road, we'll discuss the route, hazards, and other special considerations before departing. It is then that we'll determine if any changes need to be made to ride schedule based on any additional riders concerned. Remember, we are most concerned that everyone gets to participate and enjoy a safe ride. Failure to admit you are inexperienced, or have certain limitations, based on pride or any other reasons can have disastrous effects. We value your fellowship and safety more than we do any certain aspects of the ride or route.

Please ensure your bike is in good working order and that you have fueled up before you set out to ride. Any technical problem that occurs on a ride can pose a serious threat to yourself and the other riders in the group. We understand breakdowns happen, we just ask that you do what you can to help prevent them. It is better to avoid a ride if you feel there is a risk of breakdown on the journey.

Traffic Laws: You may see some riders ride through stop signs together, speed a bit to catch up, and possibly stop a lane of traffic or two. It's important to 'ride your own ride' when it comes to traffic laws. If you ride through a stop sign, you do it at your own risk. Same goes for stopping traffic, or speeding. We encourage everyone to obey all of the traffic laws that apply wherever we're riding. If you wind up with any sort of traffic violation, using the excuse "I was just doing what everyone else was doing" will not change anything. So, keep in mind, that when riding as a group, you are still responsible for your own actions.

RULES OF THE ROAD

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

ROAD CAPTAIN - The Road Captain is the leader of the ride. As the leader, he or she is responsible for setting an example for the group. The Road Captain must exercise total control over their own riding preferences and follow the ride plan while simultaneously providing clear direction to the group, constantly monitoring the group for signals being passed forward, trouble, or any situation which could result in an unsafe condition. In short, the Road Captain must act in the most disciplined and safest manner possible.

- The Road Captain always rides at the left front position so that they have the best view of the route of travel.
- The Road Captain sets the pace according to the ride plan which should indicate a comfortable speed within the posted limit. Keep in mind that (a) riders at the end of the group may have to ride a little faster to "catch up" if gaps develop in the main group, (b) it is also dangerous to set too slow a pace and impede traffic, and (c) a slow initial pace is needed after any stop so as to not create gaps in the group and to avoid an "accordion" effect.

No one is allowed to pass the Road Captain without prior agreement and only for a specific reason. Any rider that does pass the Road Captain without prior arrangement, or who rides in a manner deemed unsafe by the Road Captain is automatically off the ride and will be asked to leave the group. Safety considerations make this an absolute must.

- The Road Captain determines both the direction and lane of travel on a multiple lane road or highway. He or she is responsible for clearly and in a timely manner signaling all changes in speed, lane use, direction, and hazards such as road debris, construction, broken or slick pavement, low buck lunch (road kills), etc.. Everyone needs to understand that the Road Captain will continue on to a safe turn around location should they miss or purposely go past a turn in the interest of safety. They should not second guess the Road Captain and start making independent decisions that can put both themselves and other riders in danger.

Essentially the same rule as that stated for pace applies. That is, any rider that does not follow in the lane selected by the Road Captain is off the ride. The Road Captain must have the ability to pick the safest lane in traffic and to position the group in the appropriate lane for turns, stops, avoidance of road hazards, and when multiple lanes merge down to a single lane. Again, safety considerations make this an absolute must.

- It is advisable for the Road Captain and Sweep Rider to individually or divided between them carry some basic "emergency" type equipment such as a first aid kit, fire extinguisher, flash light, road flares, canteen (water), portable phone, maps of the general area, basic tools, and whatever else is appropriate for the particular ride.
- The Road Captain is replaced by the next rider in line if they have to drop out for any reason. There must always be a competent person in charge of the ride. Consideration should be given to who is placed in this secondary position.
- The Road Captain may in fact deviate from the ride plan as covered at the pre ride meeting if safety considerations so indicate.

SWEEP RIDER - The Sweep Rider brings up the rear of the ride group.

- The Sweep Rider always rides at the left rear position so that they have the best view of the group and route of travel.
- The Sweep Rider maintains the pace according to the ride plan and the pace established by the Road Captain. No one is allowed to fall behind the Sweep Rider. Any rider that is not experiencing difficulties and still cannot maintain the established pace is automatically off the ride and on their own.
- The Sweep Rider is responsible for determining when the group is ready to leave the start location and any intermediate stops. They signal to the Road Captain to proceed and watch out for traffic until the entire group is underway.
- The Sweep Rider is responsible for and provides assistance to any rider that encounters problems and has to either slow down or drop out of the ride. No more than one other rider should stop to help the Sweep Rider provide assistance as it is generally not safe for a larger group to park along the side of the road. If at all possible, the Sweep Rider should have or be supplied with a portable telephone and the appropriate emergency phone numbers to be used in the event of a breakdown or a mishap.
- The Sweep Rider is replaced by the next rider in line if they have to slow down or drop out for any reason. There must always be a competent person in the sweep position. Consideration should be given to who is placed in position to replace the Sweep Rider.

GROUP LEADER(S) - A very large group may make it advisable to divide the riders into logical groups of from 4 to 6 motorcycles and name one or more Group Leaders. They function under the direction of the Road Captain as leaders of their group.

- A Group Leader always rides at the left front position of their group so that they have the best view of the Road Captain, the riders ahead, and the route of travel.
- A Group Leader in essence takes over as Road Captain for their group should the main group become divided due to traffic conditions, stop lights, stop signs, etc.. They function as the Road Captain for their group and all the other groups following them until they are able to rejoin the main group. All rules that apply to the Road Captain apply to the Group Leader while they function in that capacity.
- Group Leaders share with the Road Captain the responsibility for the following:
 - Creating the opportunity and the road space required for other motorist to safely pass through the group in order to exit or enter the route of travel.
 - Insure that all traffic laws and safe riding techniques are being observed.
 - Help breakup and reform the group as a result of stop lights, stop signs, flag people, traffic conditions, etc... They should take over temporary leadership of any stray riders resulting from one of these conditions as soon as safety allows.
 - Helps pass all signals from the Road Captain to the following group of riders.

PARTICIPATING IN THE RIDE

- All Riders are responsible for their own safety at all times and will be required to ride in a safe manner or leave the ride.
- All Speed and Traffic laws must be obeyed by everyone at all times. Additionally, remember that like it or not you are representing everyone on two wheels during a group ride. Be a courteous rider and give cars and trucks every consideration. Drinking and driving is never a good idea and must be totally avoided while participating in a group ride. Should you consume alcohol during the ride at any time you will be required to depart from the ride and your membership with our riders club may be removed immediately, you may be permanently banned from our riders club. THE HRCA has a strict NO ALCOHOL policy and it will be upheld at all times.
- The normal riding formation will be the staggered or diamond formation as it is sometimes known. This formation provides the best safety margin of reaction time and space as each rider only uses one third (either right or left side depending on the stagger position) of the lane. Heavy, very slow traffic may require that you ride in a side by side column of twos for a very short distance. A staggered formation complete with a safe interval should be immediately adopted as soon as conditions allow.
- Everyone is responsible for knowing what all the hand signals mean and for passing all signals from the Road Captain to the following riders. The common hand signals are covered within this guide.
- Dress or pack according to the weather you may find on the ride or on the way home. Being too hot, too cold, or uncomfortable from a sun or wind burn will make you a less safe rider and can lead to an unfortunate situation not only for you but others on the ride.
- All riders are expected to insure that their bike is in a safe operating condition, gassed, and generally ready to go. It is no fun to crash because of a bad tire on your bike or someone else's machine. It is also very embarrassing to be asked to leave the ride because you are riding a rolling disaster and constitute a danger to everyone else. Additionally, the Sweep Rider will help if you encounter problems during the ride. They may not be so inclined if you started out knowing that you had a problem.
- All riders are responsible for knowing as much as possible about the route, times, stops, etc. They should arrive at the departure point in time to hear everything discussed at the pre ride meeting and to familiarize themselves with any maps or written instructions that may be provided. This contributes to a safer ride and adds to the enjoyment. It is not a lot of fun just following people around without knowing where you are going, when you will be able to take care of that last cup of coffee, or will your gas hold out.
- All riders must clearly signal the Sweep Rider if they decide to leave the ride for any reason. Don't make the Sweep wonder if you are having trouble and follow you to see if they can help.
- Riders should not speed up suddenly should a gap develop between them and the bike in front. Rather, they should accelerate slowly until they catch up and are back in position. This will help prevent the riders in back from over reacting and possibly running into the group when they suddenly catch up.
- Riders should signal the Road Captain when they have to pull over for an emergency by flashing their lights. All other riders are responsible for passing this signal forward until the Road Captain acknowledges that he has seen it. Remember that it is normally the Sweep Riders responsibility, if there is one on the ride, to stop and offer assistance and that no more than one other rider should stop to help the Sweep Rider as it is generally not safe for a larger group to park along the side of the road. The Road Captain will signal the group when it is safe to pull off the road should he or she feel it is necessary.

COMMON HAND SIGNALS

Hand signals should be kept simple, easy to learn and understand, and few in number. As soon as you see a signal given, you and/or your passenger should repeat the same signal so the rider behind can see it and have the maximum amount of time to react. For safety reasons all signals are given with the left hand so as to allow the right hand to have full control of the throttle and front brake.

Start Your Engine - The Ride Captain waves his LEFT hand HIGH in a circle in a "wind them up motion" and then looks back for each rider to give the "**I'm Ready To Go SIGNAL**".

I'm Ready To Go - When you are ready to go, raise your left hand high for the Ride Captain to be able to see when everyone is ready to depart.

Let's ride – Left hand raised and pointing forward.

Slow Down - Left arm straight out with palm down making a patting motion.

Speed Up - Left arm straight out with the palm up. Raise and lower the arm.

Hazard In The Road - Point with left hand or right/left foot at the object or situation.

Need Food/Drink, Gas, or a Comfort Stop – Place hand on the top of your head.

STOP, Pull over QUICK - Place hand on the top of your head and continue patting very fast.

Turn On Lights - Left arm bent at the elbow, hand facing forward and open and close your hand rapidly.

Turn Signals are On - Left arm bent at the elbow, hand facing rear and open and close your hand rapidly.

Form Single File - Left arm bent at the elbow and hold up one finger.

Form Double File - Left arm bent at the elbow and hold up two fingers.

Form Staggered Formation - Left arm bent at the elbow and hold up three fingers.

Cut Engines – Left hand in front of neck with a cutting motion

Tighten Up – Left hand extended straight out and makes a fist.

Go around me – Left hand waving forward.

Pull up side by side – Left arm and pointer finger pointing down.

FORMATION RIDING

General Comments

Staggered Riding - The lead motorcycle (Road Captain) should be in the left 1/3 lane, the second motorcycle should be in the right 1/3 lane, and so on. Each rider should leave enough room for the motorcycle in front of them to make a left or right maneuver without danger of hitting the next motorcycle in line. Typically, you should leave a minimum of about a motorcycle and a half length between you and the next motorcycle in your (1/3) lane whenever possible. Another way of stating this is that at slow speeds you should have at least a three second interval between you and the next bike directly in front of you and at least a two second interval between you and the bike to your left or right front. This time or distance interval is of course adjusted for speed.

Always stay in line with the bike in front of you and do not switch between left and right side of the lane. The objective is to keep as tight a group as possible and yet have enough separation so as to allow for required safe maneuvering room.

Passing Other Vehicles - Pre-position yourself for the pass by being far enough behind the vehicle you are going to pass to be able to see clearly down the road for an "oncoming traffic check". Signal, and if you have a passenger, have the passenger signal as well. Do a mirror check, then a head check of your blind spot, to make sure no one is passing you. Accelerate and change lanes. Remember, you legally cannot exceed the speed limit. Before returning to your lane, make a mirror check and a head check, to be sure there is space between you and the vehicle you are passing, and anyone else that is also making a pass. Return to your lane riding position and turn off your blinker. To be safe, no more than one motorcycle should pass at the same time. Never have the last motorcycle pull out and slow traffic so that the group can pass as a unit.

When Being Passed - Allow the vehicle to pass you safely by slowing down and if need be, creating a gap so that they can pass the whole group in segments rather than trying to make it all at one jump. Passing or getting passed anytime can be hazardous so use common sense and a safe approach.

GENERAL COMMENTS

PICTURES - Always try to have at least two riders bring a camera and enough film to shoot lots of pictures when planning a large ride. These visual reminders accomplish at least two things. First, everyone likes to have a record of a good time and second, they can help to build interest in future rides among viewers who were not present.

CHASE/SUPPORT VEHICLE - A big plus for a formal or large group ride is the use of a Chase or support vehicle to help with emergencies. This vehicle should be large enough to pull a two bike trailer or capable of carrying a couple of bikes in the event of serious breakdowns (I know, I know, but a Harley did break down in 1948 and it's better to err on the safe side). This is a real "crowd pleaser" as no one can stand the thought of possibly leaving their bike on the side of the road even temporarily or turning it over to a wrecker driver with a rusted hook.

- Driving the Chase Vehicle can be an opportunity for someone who would or could not otherwise participate.
- The Chase Vehicle becomes an excellent additional carrier of the emergency supplies normally carried by the Road Captain and the Sweep rider.
- The Chase Vehicle can easily carry additional emergency supplies such as a can of gas, flat fixing supplies for tubeless tires, a few containers of motor oil, a spare set of gapped spark plugs for Sportsters and big twins, a few more tools than are normally carried by each rider, etc.. However, remember that we are talking emergency use only and not a substitute for normal maintenance.
- The Chase Vehicle becomes a welcome alternative ride should someone become ill on the ride.
- A magnetic sign or banner can be procured for the vehicle to help identify our organization to the local community and to other Harley riders who are not yet members.
- Again, a portable phone for communicating with the riding group and/or emergency agencies would be helpful.