

Safety Guidelines for Group Riding

Welcome to ICENI CHAPTER HOG safe group riding guidelines, few activities builds friendships, riding camaraderie and memories faster than group ride outs. They are one of the core H.O.G. and 'ICENI CHAPTER' activities. That's why it's so important that they're conducted safely.

Riding in a group with a great bunch of friends offers some of the most enjoyable riding you'll experience anywhere.

Whether you've been riding motorcycles for decades or days, a Group Ride demands special skills and disciplines. These skills are both obvious when pointed out and easily acquired. To ride safely each rider must take on some measure of responsibility for both self and the group. To behave otherwise is to invite great risk and excessive danger. Riding with "the group" is a choice and is never compulsory.

You will no doubt find yourselves in a number of different group situations: -

Simply going out for a relaxed ride to log some miles, riding to a club meeting with six or seven bikes, or heading to a rally somewhere across the country, who knows maybe you'll even be lucky enough to join one of the events which take you onto foreign roads abroad. On some of the larger rides you could even have the benefit of a couple of support vehicles, which makes life a lot easier with loading up your luggage. You'll also find yourself in different environments, from trying to get a large group of bikes through a congested city, to rural single track roads, to high-speed travel on the motorway.

Each of these situations presents unique problems and there are obviously rules that apply to all road users.

This guide line document is intended to help you and your riding colleagues contribute to the enjoyment of group rides.

Let's begin with the rules common to all group rides, regardless of the number of bikes or the riding environment.

Safety First

On group rides it's necessary for all involved to understand that **an** individual's actions can affect the safety of other group members. Group rides are not for the selfish. Group members must be prepared to give some thought and consideration to the safety of others, and enjoyment of all.

On ride-outs, we want everyone to ride safely and within their abilities at all times. To avoid the need for anyone to have to "ride like a nutter" in order to keep up with the bikes in front, we use the "second man drop-off" technique (explained later) to sign post the route taken by the ride-out. Then everyone can ride as if they were out on their own and just enjoy their bike, the road and countryside.

While part of the ride out group there is a '***no-overtaking rule' within the group***, again for safety reasons. This means that, after setting out from each stop, riders should keep to a fixed running order and a safe distance, no matter how slow the rider in front of them may be. A group ride-out is not a race and the overall pace must be set to cater for the slowest group member. ***Please also note that overtaking riders on the inside is extremely dangerous and should never be attempted under any circumstances.***

If your group is riding independently from a chapter supported ride, then it is wise to appoint a "Road Marshall" for your group to plan every aspect of the trip. Know how often you're going to stop and where. Make sure every rider knows the destination, the route, the speed, and who's riding lead and tail.

Ride in a "staggered formation". It is unsafe ride next to another bike and never ride more than two bike widths in the lane. The staggered formation leaves each rider room to move if they need to avoid a hazard (see fig: 1a/b).

The trail bike has to be able to see ahead of the pack and the lead bike needs to be able to see the trail bike.

Allow at least one bike length for every 10 mph of travel speed. Therefore a group travelling at 50 mph should have five bike lengths between each rider in line. This may sound like it stretches the bikes way down the road, but if you consider the staggered formation, at 50mph you actually only have $2\frac{1}{2}$ bike lengths between you and the bikes in front and behind in the other row if on a dry road, this should be doubled on wet roads i.e. an easy way to remember to space required is the 2 second rule in dry conditions and the 4 second rule in the wet.

"Only a fool breaks the 2 second rule"...or 4 if its wet!

Bearing these minimum distances in mind, adjust your position so that you can see the face of the rider diagonally in front of you in their mirror, you won't then be in their blind spot and they can see you!

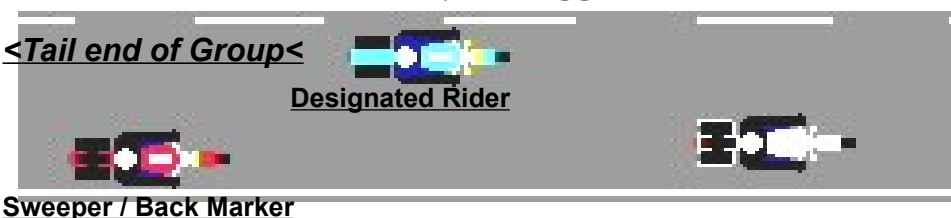
IMPORTANT

ONCE IN POSITION, KEEP YOUR POSITION, WHETHER OR NOT ANOTHER RIDER MOVES OUT OF POSITION AND WATCH FOR ROAD CREW RESPOSITIONING DURING THE RIDE.

Fig :1a/b- **The Staggered Formation**



Lead Rider positioned 'right of centre' of the lane being used, following riders should then take up a staggered formation left & right of centre.



The larger the group, the more complicated it is to try to adjust your riding position simply for the sake of maintaining the picture perfect staged formation. Riders in the back may not be able to see what is going on up front and will be confused by the sudden jockeying and shifting. It's far better to just stay where you are.

Make your preferred riding position known. If you like one part of the lane more than the other, it's your responsibility to let the other riders know. The same applies to your preference for the front, back or middle of the pack, however, as your riding confidence grows, you should be capable of riding anywhere in the group. Ride at the lowest level of comfort. If one rider doesn't want to exceed a given speed, the whole group needs to ride at that speed. Likewise, the group needs to stop at the shortest time or distance a single rider asks. No rider in a group should pressure another rider to exceed his or her limitations to keep up with the group.

IMPORTANT

RIDE WITHIN YOUR CAPABILITIES, DO NOT LET OTHERS PUSH YOU BEYOND YOUR OWN COMFORT LEVEL AND EXPERIENCE.

Lead and Trail or Sweeper riders should ride on the outside of the lane (furthest from the kerb). This gives them the best vantage point to determine when to pass, and make lane changes. (see fig: 1b).

SIGNAL. Don't assume that because all the other bikes are signalling, everyone will see. The rider behind you is counting on you to do your part.

MIRRORS. Don't forget to use them. Don't assume just because you're riding in a group that the situation behind you is safe, you will have to keep an eye out for Road Crew Outriders or Cars that have broken into the group (especially on dual carriageways), and the odd crotch rocket that wants to come past in 'full on' style.

IMPORTANT

THAT LAST LOOK BEFORE A MOVE IS CALLED A 'LIFE SAVER' FOR A VERY GOOD REASON!

Make hazards known to the riders behind you, if it is safe for you to do so. Point downward and to the side of you on which the hazard lies. Point out potholes, sand and gravel, items lying in the road or anything that may be a hazard to the riders behind you.

The lead rider identifies conditions that require the group to ride in single file. The lead rider signals this by raising a hand and pointing a single finger straight up and then moves to the safe part of the lane. Follow the rider in front of you to whichever part of the lane they go to. This is one more reason for maintaining the staggered formation, as you will always have somewhere to move to quickly, easily and safely.

When the lead rider makes a wrong (or suspected wrong) turn the entire group follows. Just because you suspect the lead went the wrong way, don't split the group. Doing so creates far more trouble than getting the mistake corrected. The person who suspects that an error has been made should pass the other bikes, if and when it is safe to do so, and ask the lead to pull over at a safe place and check the map.

Yes!!! Even you guy's who are too proud to either ask directions or check a map!!!

OK, so hopefully, that pretty much covers the basics that apply to riding in any size of group. Now let's address some specific situations and conditions which require more detailed guidelines:

Second Man Drop (Off Route Signing).

This is a well-used practice for navigating a group of riders through any deviation from the straight ahead route.

It is a system that greatly reduces the risk of riders missing a turn, or getting lost, and is useful when driving through towns and cities. This method is used throughout HOG and most of the well respected Motor Cycle Clubs.

Before the start of any ride out the Lead Road Captain will brief the riders of the route and format to be taken. As the name suggests, the second rider in the formation, when approaching any left or right turn and on the specific instruction (usually indicated by pointing) of the Road Captain / Lead Bike - will drop off the group and stop in a safe and prominent position from where he/she can point the following riders in the right direction.

When the group has passed, the second man marker bike will rejoin the group just ahead of the Sweeper / Trail Bike.

As the journey progresses all the riders in the group, apart from the lead and tail riders, will have their turn as the second rider.

It is essential that the second bike stops in a safe position and does not present a hazard to him/her self or others; it is also recommended that the hazard flashers on the bike are used to increase visibility.

Parking

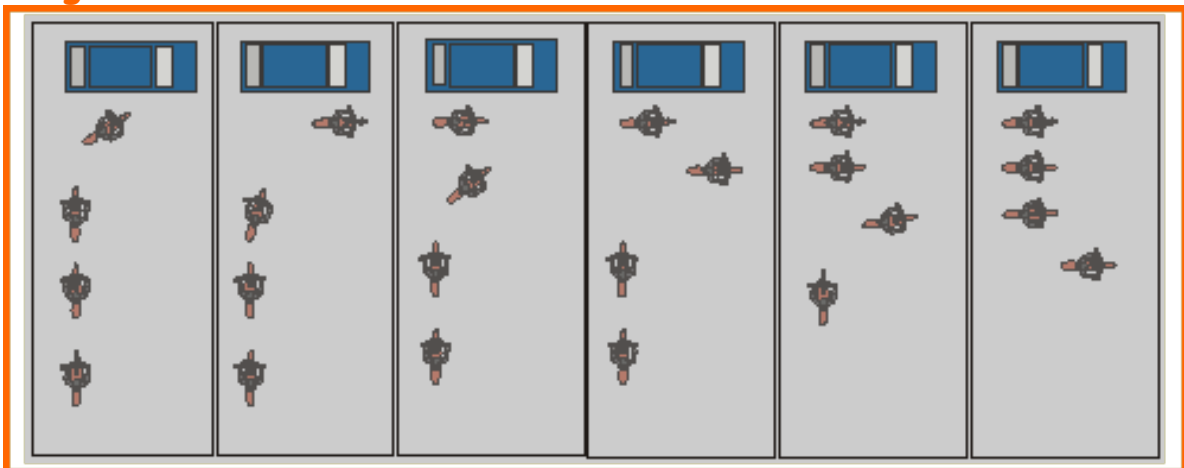
This is almost an art, and when executed correctly creates an impressive display.

Regardless of where you are parking (car park, rest stop, etc) the lead rider has to first spot an area large enough to accommodate all the bikes. If there isn't one, pick two smaller areas and identify which rider in the group becomes the dividing point.

The group must move into single file. The lead rider goes to an appropriate point in the selected parking area, riding parallel to the edge. Upon reaching the parking spot, the lead rider turns with the front wheel pointing away from the edge and into the middle of the parking area, and then backs the rear wheel towards the edge (kerb), parked at an angle toward the direction of departure. This puts you in the position when leaving to pull straight out without everyone trying to roll their bikes backward. If you have ever tried to paddle your bike backwards uphill on grass or gravel you will understand the benefit of parking rear wheel pointing down a camber. Each rider in order follows the path the lead rider took and parks in the same manner along side each other. Give the rider in front enough space and time to get their bike parked before you pull in next to them. When pulling out the first bikes in are the first bikes out, the last bikes in are the last bikes out.

Fig: 2

Parking



Motorways / Dual Carriageways

Everyone who has driven on a motorway knows that motorways provide a whole new experience. Together with trying to move a group of bikes in formation and you have the makings of some great "There I was ..." tales. To make sure all these tales have happy ending, let's look at the special conditions for group riding on motorways and dual carriageways.

Limit the size of the group. Occasionally, a rally ride out or similar event will cause you to have a huge group on the motorway, but this should be the exception and an occasion such as this would normally have a Police escort or similar. If the pack consists of any more than 10 - 12 bikes the Road Captain will consider splitting the group into two packs, and will notify everybody at the pre-ride briefing. There are a couple of reasons for this: Groups any larger than this are harder to move. Inevitably, the group will block a car's entrance, access to an off ramp / slip road or passing lane, or slow them down. When you do any of these things, the cars have a tendency to force themselves into the spot they're after and this can be extremely dangerous.

The trail bike has to be able to see ahead of the pack and the lead bike needs to be able to see the trail bike. With this in mind, during a group run only the lead and trail riders should drive with spot lights on. Group members riding in the middle of the pack should turn off any spot or passing lamps as this will make the Road Captains job a lot easier to see and identify the trail bike at a glance.

Every member of the group needs to be watching what the lead and trail riders are doing.

Overtaking / passing on motorways / dual carriageways is done from the back to the front. The trail rider is watching the traffic in front of the group to determine when the group is approaching slower traffic.

IMPORTANT

THE TRAIL RIDER CONTROLS PASSING! THE TRAIL RIDER PICKS A SAFE POINT TO MOVE THE GROUP INTO THE PASSING LANE AND IS THE FIRST BIKE TO MOVE

Once the sweeper / trail bike is in the passing lane the rest of the group can move over, from back to front falling behind any passing traffic. This way the group will not be split.

Moving the group back is not as synchronous as the move into the passing lane. The lead rider will move far enough beyond the passed traffic to get a few bikes back over. Trying to get far enough ahead for the whole group to move back takes too long and jams traffic to the rear.

IMPORTANT

EACH RIDER MUST KEEP THE SPEED UP AS THEY MOVE BACK TO THE NEAR SIDE LANE SO THOSE FOLLOWING CAN GET BEYOND THE PASSED VEHICLE AND ALSO MOVE INTO THE NEAR SIDE LANE WITHOUT GETTING JAMMED.

We can't ignore the wet stuff, especially on the motorways. When you're on the motorway in the wet and come upon slower traffic, as you overtake it, move to the far right of the overtaking lane, leaving everyone else plenty of room to get all the way over and form a single file to the far right. The spray from the traffic being passed, especially the big trucks, makes it nearly impossible to see. Getting as far over to the right as you safely can improve visibility greatly.

During wet weather you will notice that holding the staggered formation will also mean that you will be riding on a reasonably dry line that has been cleared by the tyres of preceding traffic. Also if any debris is on the carriageway it is less likely to be in these two areas again having been thrown clear by preceding traffic.

Watch for the situations that require every rider to act on their own. The most common of these situations will be cars entering the motorway.

When passing an on ramp with cars entering traffic and no opportunity to move the whole group, each rider may be in the way of entering car(s) that need to find and move to an opening. This may mean moving and accelerating beyond the car(s), or slowing down to create an opening in the midst of the group for the car(s) to enter.

If you slow to let the car move into the group, stay in the nearside lane behind the car. Don't try to drag the remainder of the group around the car. If the group gets split, the lead rider will slow the forward section of the group until the car moves out to pass them.

If you move over to let the car in, pass the car and pull in behind the bikes ahead. If your position leaves you behind the car, stay there. Once the riders that have moved to the offside rejoin the lead section, the lead rider will slow the group as mentioned above.

Entering and exiting the motorway can present unique challenges. When entering, the best way to do so is for the trail rider to move into traffic first. Everyone else then moves over just as you would when passing. However, sometimes you will be faced with a short on ramp, and more bikes than can fit the ramp. This will mean the preferred method isn't always possible. In this case, every rider is going to have to pick a place to get in to the traffic stream and then wait for the lead rider to slow the pace enough for the various pockets of bikes to be passed by the cars and reform into a single group.

When exiting the motorway, you must try to avoid jamming up the back end of the group. This is why it's important to make sure all the riders know where the stops and motorway changes are ahead of time. But even unplanned stops can be made without squashing the group. The lead rider needs to signal the planned slowdown well before actually beginning to slow. The signal will be: Left arm extended, palm downward, and moving in an up and down motion. All following riders give the signal to let the riders in back know to begin slowing down. This prevents the riders in the back from running into the riders in front as everyone slows to exit speed.

Cities and other congested areas

Keep the group small, ride single file passed parked cars.

Make sure everyone can get through controlled junctions before anyone starts moving into it.

Riders caught by the red light must stop. Do not jeopardise your life or your licence by jumping a red light just to stay with the rest of the group.

General Points of Ride outs

Right now you're thinking all advice above is great, but how do we follow these instructions when we've got fifty, sixty, or seventy bikes in parade formation and have to pass through cities and towns?

Simple.....LEAVE IT TO THE CHAPTER ROAD CREW!!!

They'll assign experienced people to ride as *Marshalls* or *Markers* if they feel the need, and will notify everyone of this at the pre-ride briefing. Those appointed as markers have done so before and will handle their responsibilities without affecting the way the rest of the group rides.

The average Chapter member only needs to follow the basic rules for large groups to make the ride a safe one. Just be aware that the markers will need to come from the back of the pack to the front, merging into the formation when faced with oncoming traffic. All you have to do is keep an eye on your mirror and move over and give them room should they need it.

However don't assume any junction will be marked, ultimately you are responsible for your own safety. You should satisfy yourself that it is safe for you to proceed. Don't flaunt the law or the common sense rules of the road.

Breakdowns

As hard as it is to believe, Harley's occasionally break down. So what do you do when you're on the road with a group of bikes and your bike goes kaput?

If a bike drops out of the pack, a designated bike will always stop to help. The designated bike will be selected at the pre-ride briefing and will ride immediately in front of the trail bike.

The trail bike will then pass the pack to notify the lead, so the entire group can stop at a safe location. After assessing the situation, the designated bike that stopped with the broken bike should proceed to the rest of the group so that a plan can be made to repair or retrieve the broken bike.

NEVER LEAVE STRANDED A RIDER OR BIKE!

Naturally, for every guideline listed here, a situation will arise that isn't covered and for every situation listed here, it may be necessary to 'bend the rules'.

It's impossible to cover everything you'll face in this sort of guide and this isn't intended as a definitive rule book for every situation. What this guide document is intended to do is to prepare you in advance so you don't have to learn from mistakes made on the road.

IMPORTANT

MISTAKES ON THE ROAD ARE DANGEROUS ENOUGH; MISTAKES MADE IN A GROUP HAVE THE ADDED IMPACT OF ENDANGERING SOMEONE ELSE.

Summary

- Group riding is not for the selfish, it's not a race so don't chase the rider ahead. Adopt a safe attitude ride with pride.
- Keep the rider behind in view at all times - slow down and/or stop and wait if contact with the following riders is lost.
- Maintain a good margin of safety at all times, whether it be the gap between riders or the distance from other traffic.
- Keep within your capabilities and observe speed limits.
- Remember, some riders have less experience or ride lesser powered bikes, please respect these riders' situations.
- Overtaking opportunities should be taken as they are presented but, if in doubt, hold back.
- On straight open sections of road, riders should ride in a staggered formation.
- Remember the two-second rule and maintain a safe distance.
- In situations where it is not possible or safe to ride in a staggered formation, move into single file and increase the distance from the rider in front.
- When the group stops, riders should close up side by side so that the group occupies the minimum length of road necessary.

If you have questions, comments or ideas please speak to the Head Road Captain, Assistant Director/Safety Officer. Hopefully you will now be better prepared for safe and enjoyable group ride outs, so get together with some friends and have a great time!

Its Simple Really.....Ride Safe and Have Fun!

ICENI CHAPTER HOG SAFE RIDING GUIDE

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