

Riding With a Group

Mark Welch — Safety Officer



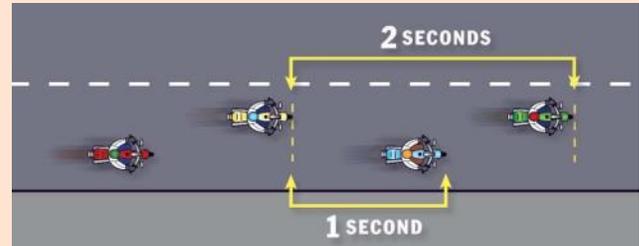
Last January, our HOG chapter posted an article on group riding. Our head road captains, Jan and Fred, asked that the topic be re-addressed again for the enjoyment of everyone when our chapter goes on a ride. So here are some tips for the next

group ride, HOG or otherwise you have the opportunity to join:

Arrive prepared! Have a full gas tank and an empty bladder before the pre-ride briefing begins.

Ride information. There will be a pre-ride briefing where important information gets disseminated concerning the ride. It does not matter how many times you have heard the safety briefing, or even if you are a road captain just along for the ride, make certain you attend the pre-ride briefing. Notice our head road captains, Jan and Fred. They will attend the briefing even though they are the ones who provide the orientation for our new captains.

Ride in formation. (See what I did there?) Our chapter uses a staggered formation when group riding. It is important to maintain the formation when there are multiple bike riding together. The staggered formation allows enough space cushion between motorcycles to allow proper time and distance to maneuver while reacting to hazards. The captain will ride in the left third of the lane and the next bike will be in the right third one second behind the captain. Everyone else should be two seconds behind the bike directly in front of them and one second behind the bike that is to their left or right. It does not matter what speed you are traveling, if you maintain the one second and two second rule, your following distance will increase as your speed increase. It is important to maintain the formation, particularly when cornering. Side-by-side riding should not be performed. Handlebars get tangled up when you



ride that way! The only time you should have a motorcycle directly beside you is when you are stopped.

If you fall behind, don't ride unsafe in order to catch up. Another reason for the pre-ride briefing is to learn the destination and the path to get there. The road captain will watch out for you and pull over to wait for the remainder of the group at the first available spot.

Everyone is a gunner. There will be a designated gunner for each ride whose job is to remain with any HOG member who drops out of the ride for any reason. When that occurs, the last rider in the formation becomes the gunner for that ride. Gunners take this job seriously. We did an out of state ride to the mountains and I experienced a mechanical failure on my bike that took several hours to repair. I had to practically beg the captain and gunner to proceed with the rest of the group to the destination without me. They reluctantly went on and I met them at the destination once the necessary repairs were made to my bike.

Hand signals. These will be discussed at the pre-ride briefing. Make certain you pass the signal back to the gunner when you get the signal from the rider ahead of you.

New to group riding? Position yourself near the rear of the group until you have a little more experience riding in a group.

The road captains put a lot of effort into making certain the group rides are enjoyable for everyone. Make certain you show them your appreciation for their diligence when you reach your destination Ride safe. Mark