

Version:  
04052020

# *Southern Cruisers Riding Club*

*Palm Coast, Florida, Chapter 702*

## *Road Captain, Safety Captain, & Tail Gunner Guidelines*

**Version:  
04052020**

COMPILED BY: SCRC FL, PALM COAST, CHAPTER 702

*Remember, this is a Guideline, not a Rule-book!*

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## **1. WELCOME**

- (a) The intent of this guideline is to give everyone information required to ride together safely. Please keep in mind that these guidelines are not intended to restrict your freedom, but instead, to help ensure that we all return home safely.
- (b) These guidelines cannot encompass every possible set of circumstances, and they are intended to serve as a basic guide for most situations.
- (c) Each person is therefore expected to read, understand, and apply these guidelines, using their best judgment.
- (d) Please remember that **YOU** have the ultimate responsibility for **YOUR** safety. Always ride within your capabilities and that of your machine.
- (e) While this guideline states that the Road Captain is in charge of a particular ride, overall it is the 1st Officer of the Chapter that is in charge of all functions concerning the chapter. All officers should be familiar with this guide and safe riding practices.

## **2. CONGRATULATIONS ROAD, SAFETY CAPTAINS & TAIL GUNNERS!**

You have just volunteered for the most challenging and rewarding position within our club. Once you have been appointed or elected as a Road, Safety Captain & Tail Gunner, you will have joined a very special team that will help plan, organize, and execute our club rides. The following guidelines have been developed to give you a basic understanding of the responsibilities, Objectives and recommended qualifications expected of our Road, Safety Captains and Tail Gunners, and the methods employed to help ensure everyone's safe return home, and to have an enjoyable ride.

## **3. OBJECTIVES:**

- (a) Provide for the safety and welfare of all individuals within the group, and surrounding motorists and/or pedestrians.
- (b) Lead the group to its destination and back in a well-organized, disciplined, and safe manner.
- (c) Avoid creating hazardous situations.

(d) Be the most knowledgeable of the state laws and safe riding guidelines.

#### 4. ROAD CAPTAIN'S RESPONSIBILITIES:

(a) Maintain a current and valid motorcycle driver's license.

(b) Maintain current and valid motorcycle insurance, with no less than the MINIMUM required by Your State for street riding purposes.

(c) Lead the group in a manner consistent with the objectives and guidelines as stated herein, and execute his or her best judgment in situations not specifically covered in these guidelines.

(d) Brief Tail Gunner(s) as to route, responsibilities, and details pertinent to the ride prior to departure. If possible, have a means to communicate during the ride.

(e) Conduct a rider's briefing prior to departure.

(f) Be responsible for the final decision regarding ride termination due to inclement weather, hazardous conditions, or other difficult or unsafe conditions.

(g) Instruct a rider to ride in a specific position within the group, or leave the group entirely, for reasons of misconduct, disorderly or unsafe riding, or faulty/unsafe equipment. ***Common sense and tact should be used!***

(h) Be responsible for bringing a well-maintained first aid kit to the ride.

(i) Be responsible for bringing a well-stocked tool kit to the ride.

(j) Having a cell phone for 911 purposes. Should the Road Captain not possess a cell phone, designate a 911 notification caller within the group.

(k) Establish and maintain a uniform speed consistent with the ability of the least experienced rider, and in consideration of safe road conditions, traffic, and weather conditions.

(l) Lead the standard formation of a staggered double row, in one traffic lane.

(m) Be at the head of the group and ride just to the left of lane center.

(n) Maintain a safe following distance by using the MINIMUM 2-second rule between the group and any vehicle ahead. This distance may be increased at the discretion of the Road Captain, but NOT decreased.

- (o) Command the group to a single file formation when they cannot maintain visual control of the road conditions ahead over a **MINIMUM of a 4 second distance**, narrow road, mountain/curvy roads, traveling directly adjacent to parked vehicles, or any other condition which may severely restrict the ability of individual group members to perform emergency avoidance maneuvers.

## 5. ROAD CAPTAIN CHECKLIST:

- (a) Welcome riders and introduce road captains
- (b) Communicate the destination and outline route.
- (c) Determine gas/rest stop requirements
- (d) Outline itinerary for the day. Photo ops, etc.
- (e) Determine return plans
- (f) Review:
  - i. riding standards (*section 7, page 7*)
  - ii. Staggered position and safe distance (*refer to diagram, Section 27 page 25*)
  - iii. Entrance and exit procedures
  - iv. Lane changes
  - v. Single file procedures
  - vi. Hand signals, review hand signals, (*refer to diagram, Section 25 page 22*)
  - vii. How to pass hand signals to the rear
  - viii. Broken bike procedure
- (g) Locate cell phones and first aid kits
- (h) Designate 911 notification
- (i) Determine riding group by size, skill level, & cruising speed
- (j) Remind everyone to have fun, to ride safely, and offer a thanks from Southern Cruisers for attending.

## 6. TAIL GUNNER (has the same qualifications as Road/Safety Capt.)

- (a) Will assist the Road Captain in the performance of his/her duties.
- (b) May be required to assume the duties of Road Captain in his or her absence.
- (c) Will be responsible for bringing a First Aid kit to the ride.

- (d) Will be responsible for bringing a well-stocked tool kit to the ride.
- (e) Will ride at the rear of the group (except when conditions dictate otherwise) unless required to take on the responsibilities of the Road Captain.
- (f) Will be observant of any hazardous conditions or conduct, take immediate corrective action, and inform the Road Captain at the earliest, safe opportunity.

**NOTE:**The urgency to inform the Road Captain is left to the discretion of the observing Tail Gunner. Use of radio equipment is recommended!

- (g) Will normally ride at the rear of the formation where they can see the formation the best.
- (h) Will provide lane protection. On the highway, as the group prepares to make a lane change, the Tail Gunner will make the lane change as soon as is safe to do so, followed by the Road Captain, then the remainder of the group. In this way, the Tail Gunner protects that lane keeping it clear for the entire group to move into this lane. Use of radio equipment is recommended!

## **7. SAFETY OFFICER (same Resp. as Road Capt. & Tail Gunner including):**

- (a) Periodically Check Safety equipment used by Road Capt(s). & Tail Gunner(s)
  - i. First Aid Kit(s)
    - A. Make note to 1<sup>st</sup> Officer if equipment is not up to par or needs replacement
  - ii. Tool Kit(s)
    - A. Make note to 1<sup>st</sup> Officer if equipment is not up to par or needs replacement
- (b) Check for Communication Equipment (who has; *Cell phones, CB. GMRS Radio(s) or Bluetooth Comm units*).
- (c) Check that Road Capt(s) have a list of all Riders with emergency contact info.
- (d) Check that Road Capt(s). & Tail Gunner have correct Route Map(s) (*address, Phone no. of Destination*)
- (e) It is understood the responsibility of each Rider to Maintain their motorcycle and other equipment in a safe riding condition. That being said, the Safety Officer will notify the Road Captain should it be observed that there is an obvious Safety Issue.

## 8. GROUP RIDERS RESPONSIBILITIES:

(a) Group Riders will:

- i. Observe the objectives and guidelines in order to ensure the safety and the welfare of every individual within the group, and surrounding motorists or pedestrians.
- ii. Follow the instructions of the Road Captain in all situations, unless those instructions place the rider or any other individual in an unsafe situation.

(b) Maintain their motorcycle and other equipment in a safe riding condition.

- i. Ride with headlights on.
- ii. Ride with a "safety first" attitude. The safety of all individuals, whether or not they are a part of the group, is of paramount importance.
- iii. Ride with a helmet where the state law requires a helmet.
- iv. **Not** ride while under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Use good judgment.

## 9. MEETING PLACE AND DEPARTURE TIME:

(a) Meeting place and departure times will be posted to the membership by e-mail, Facebook or on the Chapter website prior to the scheduled event.

(b) A rider briefing will be held prior to departure to establish a schedule for gas and rest stops, inform the group of the intended route, provide other pertinent information, and review the group riding guidelines, including formations, procedures and hand signals. (*Group Riders must pass hand signals to the rear!*)

(c) Individuals should make every effort to arrive promptly at the scheduled meeting location and with a full gas tank.

## 10. RIDING FORMATION AND INDIVIDUAL POSITIONS:(refer to Sec. 27 Diagram)

(a) The standard formation (under good conditions of road, traffic, and weather) will be a staggered, double row of bikes, in one traffic lane. The spaced interval will be no less than one second between staggered riders, which will automatically make a 2 second interval between you and the bike directly in front of you.



- (b) The Road Captain will be at the head of the group, and typically will ride just to the left of lane center. The Tail Gunner will ride at the rear of the formation.
- (c) New members, guests, and riders with little experience in group riding will be positioned at the front of the group, just behind the Road Captain.
- (d) Each rider should maintain his or her starting lineup position in the group until arrival at the destination. This allows each rider to become more familiar with the riding style and habits of those nearest him or her in the group. This is particularly important for new or inexperienced riders.
- (e) Under certain conditions, the Road Captain will signal the group to form a single file formation. The signal is the left arm held overhead with one finger extended. Drop back to a safe following distance from the rider in front of you and move into a single file.
- (f) It may be necessary to form smaller groups for safety due to surrounding conditions or local ordinances. There should be a temporary Road Captain to lead and a Tail Gunner to control the second part of the group.
- (g) This may mean that the last rider of each group will become the Tail Gunner for that group. If possible, this rider should be another experienced Road Captain or Tail Gunner. If another Road Captain / Tail Gunner is not available, this rider should be briefed prior to the ride, about his or her responsibilities, in the event this situation should occur.
- (h) It is recommended that trikes and other three wheeled bikes, bikes with sidecars or, trailers ride in the rear of the formation and ride single file at all times, ahead of the Tail Gunner.

## **11. SPEED, INTERVALS AND DISTANCES:**

- (a) The Road Captain will attempt to establish and maintain a uniform speed; consistent with the ability of the least experienced rider, surrounding conditions, posted speed limit, and safe riding practices. They should establish the abilities of the people and the bikes prior to departure, focusing on new riders, new members

and visitors. The Road Captain should continually check his mirrors to ensure the formation is in good shape.

- (b) The Road Captains may choose to separate the group of inexperienced riders into a group of their own, consistent with expected or actual conditions, making sure there is an acting, experienced Road Captain and Tail Gunner to guide them.
- (c) All riders should try to maintain the same speed. This will minimize the effect of irregular speeds on riders at the rear of the group.
- (d) All riders will maintain a safe distance between themselves and the rider directly ahead, consistent with existing road, traffic, and weather conditions.

## **12. MINIMUM SAFE FOLLOWING DISTANCE(S):**

- (a) Within the group, a safe distance is defined as a MINIMUM TWO SECOND DELAY between the rider, and the next rider directly ahead (ref. NOTE below). This means that there is a MINIMUM of a ONE SECOND DELAY between staggered riders. Whenever a single file formation is employed, a safe distance remains defined as a MINIMUM of a TWO SECOND DELAY between the rider, and the rider directly ahead. This is a guideline for average highway riding. The gap should be determined by the speed and road conditions. The gap should be established before the ride for the sections of road to be traveled. The faster the speed, the more spacing there should be. We also do not want huge gaps in the formation where other vehicles can break into the formation. This creates a dangerous situation for the riders. The gap should be consistent throughout the formation.
- (b) With respect to vehicles ahead of the group, a safe distance is defined as an ABSOLUTE MINIMUM of a THREE SECOND DELAY between the Road Captain, and any vehicle directly ahead of the group. If a car pulls in front of the formation, make adjustments to keep a good distance.

**NOTE:** It's important to keep in mind that a two second interval is a MINIMUM safe requirement in order to react to a potentially hazardous condition - NOT TO STOP. In group riding, a one-second interval between STAGGERED riders is a policy consistent

with the recommendations of most traffic and safety agencies. STAGGERED motorcycles are in a "virtual" lane of their own. There is a two-second interval between motorcycles in a direct line. This group riding technique requires all participants to constantly ANTICIPATE an EMERGENCY.

### **13. SAFE LANE POSITION:**

- (a) A safe lane position is defined as riding immediately to the right or left of lane center. This will keep the riders off the center oil stain, while maintaining the staggered formation distance between riders and other obstacles.

### **14. TRAFFIC LANES:**

- (a) The Road Captain will attempt to lead the group in a single lane when:
  - i. The traffic flow appears to be most consistent with the speed of the group (*using lane changes only when necessary to pass slower traffic or to avoid a hazardous condition*); and to avoid blocking faster surrounding traffic.
  - ii. On highways with two lanes each direction, the group will normally travel in the number two lane, also known as the "SLOW" lane, allowing faster traffic to pass to left; except when passing slower traffic on the right.
  - iii. On highways with three or more lanes in each direction, the group will normally travel in the number two lane, keeping the right lane open for other vehicles entering and exiting the highway, and the left lane(s) for traffic to pass.

**NOTE:** Lanes are counted from left to right. The left lane is often referred to as the "FAST" or "PASSING" lane and is counted as lane number one. Remaining traffic lanes are then counted until the right most, or "SLOW" lane is counted.

### **15. LANE CHANGES AND PASSING:**

- (a) On a multi-lane highway, the double row staggered formation will normally be maintained.
- (b) The Road Captain will hold his or her position and signal for a lane change.
- (c) All riders will hold their positions and pass the signal to the rear.
- (d) The Tail Gunner will change lanes at the first safe opportunity, protecting the lane

for the group, and allowing the Road Captain to see that the lane is clear and protected. The Road Captain should be aware of when the Tail Gunner has changed lanes by using his mirrors (*and/or radio*). Make a head check to insure no cars are beside the formation.

- (e) The formation will change lanes using the "follow the leader" approach. The Road Captain will make a definite hand signal, indicating to the formation he is moving into the other lane & change lanes first, followed by all other riders moving from the front to the rear of the group.

**NOTE:** NO ONE, except the Tail Gunner, is to change lanes before the Road Captain. ALWAYS make a HEAD CHECK before you begin the lane change and maintain safe distances. There are times when there is minimal traffic where the Road Captain may signal a lane change and move over (*after checking to make sure it's clear*).

- (f) There are also times it will not be possible for the entire group to change lanes as above, e.g., when traffic is heavy. When this situation arises, the Road Captain will signal for a turn and immediately signal the group with one finger extended into the air., the combined signals indicate that changing lanes as a group is not possible. The Road Captain will then change lanes when safe to do so. Everyone signals, and changes lanes front to back, **as individuals, when safe to do so**. Should the group become separated, regroup when it is safe to do so. Please use good safety practices, INCLUDING HEAD CHECKS.
- (g) On a two-lane road with two-way traffic (*one lane each way*), a single file formation should be used when passing other vehicles. The Road Captain should also maintain a steady speed after the slow-moving vehicle has been passed, allowing the individual riders room to move back into formation ahead of the passed vehicle.
- (h) If, for any reason the group becomes separated, merge safely back into the formation, returning to your original position, using good safety practices. Don't feel it's necessary to break the world land speed record trying to catch up. The Road Captain will be aware and adjust accordingly, once they are clear of the passed

vehicle.

**NOTE:** Be certain the road is clear, and always make a HEAD CHECK immediately prior to initiating any maneuver that may cause you to cross other road users. The Road Captain, your mirror, or what you saw just a second ago are no substitutes for your own eyes, good judgment, and common sense! **Please remember that YOU, and ONLY YOU, are RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR SAFETY.** When dealing with our four wheeled friends, you will never win a contest against them. It won't do any good to be "Dead Right".

## **16. GAS, FOOD, REST STOPS, AND TOLLS:**

- (a) If necessary, gas, food, and rest stops should be discussed and scheduled prior to departure. These scheduled stops should be adhered to as much as possible .
- (b) Deviation from the scheduled stops may be required due to weather, traffic, bladder conditions, availability of gas, rider fatigue, and other unforeseen circumstances.
- (c) Gas and rest stops should be limited to no more than ten to fifteen minutes, depending on the size of the group. Remember the last rider in the group waits the longest, therefore has the shortest rest period.
- (d) If toll stops are included, money should be collected in advance. If available, a riding couple should be positioned in the number two slot. As the group approaches the tollbooth, the Road Captain will allow this bike to assume the lead position in order to exchange the toll. The Road Captain will assume the lead as soon as it is safe to do so. If a riding couple is not available, it then becomes the Road Captain's responsibility to pay at the tollbooth.

**NOTE:** Remember to avoid the center of the lane when nearing or passing through a tollbooth. They are usually extremely slick.

## **17. UNSCHEDULED OR EMERGENCY STOPS:**

- (a) Unscheduled stops for gas, restroom, or rider fatigue can lead to confusion in the group, and confusion can lead to accidents. The Road Captain should be informed that a stop is necessary in order to lead the group in an organized fashion to the

next convenient and safe place to stop (*Use a radio if available*).

- (b) Any rider with an equipment problem should inform one of the Officers, Road Captain, or Tail Gunner as quickly, and as safely as possible.
- (c) When the Road Captain is informed, he or she will stop the group at the earliest, safest, possible moment.
- (d) If the rider must pull over immediately, ONLY the Tail Gunner or assigned formation mechanic will accompany that rider to a stop. If there is an assigned mechanic, they should be at the rear of the formation. The Road Captain should be informed if he or she is not aware of this situation. Once the Road Captain is informed, he or she will pull the group over as soon as it is safe to do so. (*Use radio if available*)
- (e) Any rider observing a problem with another rider's equipment should inform that rider as quickly and safely as possible. If it appears that a stop is necessary, the Road Captain should also be notified.
- (f) The Road Captain should use good judgment and common sense when choosing a spot to pull over. Try to avoid an area with hazards to motorcycles, such as broken glass, trash, loose sand, gravel, and fresh asphalt.

## **18. ACCIDENTS:**

- (a) In the event the group comes upon the scene of an accident or if someone in the group is involved in an accident, the Road Captain will stop the group at the earliest possible moment (*keeping with good safety practices*). It may be necessary for the group to disperse and park separately to avoid creating additional hazardous conditions. (*Use radio if available*)
- (b) Members of the group will help in any practical way possible, including, but not limited to:
  - i. Slow, divert, or stop traffic in a safe manner, using flares if available.
  - ii. Aid and comfort those involved.
  - iii. Call 911 to notify the police, ambulance, and or fire service, as the situation demands.

- iv. Maintain order and preserve the accident scene for a police investigation.
- v. If possible, take photographs.
- vi. If possible, obtain license plate numbers and vehicle descriptions, including driver descriptions, in the event of a hit and run violation.
- vii. Obtain names and addresses of witnesses, if necessary.
- viii. If possible, maintain overall control of the situation until relieved by the proper authorities.

**19. HAND SIGNALS (see diagram section 25 page24):**

- (a) At all times, standard hand signals will be used for: changing the formation to a single row and back to double staggered, all turns, lane changes, slowing, and stopping. Turn signal lights must always also be used .
- (b) **Signals must be relayed to the rear of the group to allow all riders to take appropriate precautionary measures and be to aware of changes in speed and direction.** Once the hand signal is given and the person sees in their mirror that it is being passed on, they may return to gripping their handlebars with both hands. The only one that needs to "hold" the hand signal is the Tail Gunner until he / she reaches the spot of the maneuver.
- (c) Riders should point out road hazards to following riders by pointing.
- (d) Left arm held high, one finger extended overhead indicates single file, and extended following distance.
  - i. The Road Captain will move as an individual, to whatever maneuver or position is required.
  - ii. The group will follow as individuals, in a "follow the leader" approach, signaling and following the Road Captain as appropriate and safe.
- (e) Left arm held high with two fingers extended overhead indicates the standard staggered formation.
- (f) Left arm held low & to the side, palm facing backwards, indicates slow and or stop.
- (g) Other signals may be used as required (**see diagram section 25 page24**)

## 20. SAFETY EQUIPMENT:

- (a) It is assumed that all riders will come to the ride with a well-maintained motorcycle.
- (b) All riders should show up with appropriate riding apparel for the weather conditions.
- (c) All group riders are encouraged to bring a well-stocked tool kit.
- (d) All group riders are encouraged to bring a well-maintained first aid kit.
- (e) Road Captains should bring the following:
  - i. First aid kit.
  - ii. Route maps.
  - iii. Ride information.
  - iv. Cell phone. If a Road Captain does not have a cell phone, he or she will locate another group rider who does (*obviously, subject to availability*), and designate that rider as the 911 caller.
  - v. *Two way radio, if available, to talk to Tail Gunner.*

## 21. LEAVING THE RIDE EARLY:

- (a) If you need to leave the ride early, please notify the Road Captain AND the Tail Gunner where you plan on leaving the group. If possible be at the rear of the formation (*ahead of the Tail Gunner*) prior to leaving the group. Any bikes following should move up into the standard group riding positions.

## 22. BLOCKING:

- (a) The cars on the road have the right of way and blocking is considered illegal. Blocking should only be done with prior arrangements/approval from local law enforcement officials.

## 23. TUNNELS:

- (a) On a motorcycle, the instant of going from sunlight to darkness is disorientating. Your eyes are not used to the dark. The first thing you do is instinctively brake a little.
- (b) The eyes of car drivers as well do not adjust to darkness instantly. They may not



even see the yellow line on the road in a tunnel. In addition there are often bicyclists encountered in tunnels as well.

**(c) WHEN APPROACHING TUNNELS:**

- i. SLOW DOWN FAR AHEAD OF TIME
- ii. ALLOW MORE SPACE BETWEEN RIDERS
- iii. GET INTO SINGLE FILE
- iv. STAY AWAY FROM THE CENTER YELLOW LINE.

**24. CURVES:**

- (a) There are many opinions on curves. A lot depends on how sharp the curve is. This is one of the many reasons to ride in a good, even staggered formation. This allows riders to be able to shift in the lane to take a curve better or assume single file if signaled by the Road Captain to do so.
- (b) Several groups have established signals to spread out the gap & this works well before going into curves to allow more freedom for the individual riders to have more space to work with.
- (c) If the Road Captain sees that the curve may be a little sharp for the group, he/she can anticipate by signaling to slow down before going into the curve. If they are sharp curves, single file spacing is preferred, with at least 3-4 seconds apart. This gives the rider the option to use as much of the road as they want and also allows for people slowing down when going into sharp corners.
- (d) Also be aware that after heavy rains on these kinds of roads, sand and mud will be washed down onto the roadway & can make the curves & corners very dangerous.
- (e) Road Captain must be aware of the riding experience of the people they are leading on a ride.
- (f) A pre-ride of the route (*when possible*) is recommended.
- (g) It is also up to the individual rider to honestly assess and know his/her abilities. Sometimes it is best if groups I split up by ability when encountering a long series of

sharp curves. The most important thing to remember is use good judgment & common sense.

## **25. TIPS AND PAST EXPERIANCE:**

- (a) Nothing can replace Good Judgment and Common Sense!!!!
- (b) It is recommended for the Road Captain to have scouted the route prior to conducting the ride, if at all possible.
- (c) Be aware of places you may have to stop. Watch for loose gravel or sand.
- (d) The arrows painted on the lanes indicating the lane traffic flow become slick when wet.
- (e) Watch for oil slicks around stoplights, stop signs or around areas where cars may have to sit for a period of time.
- (f) **The use of 2-way radios from Road Captain to Tail Gunner is recommended.**
- (g) When pulling out from a stop sign or stoplight and after making a turn, an even, steady acceleration is recommended. This will keep the formation together better than speeding up & having to slow back down. Do not slow to make sure the formation is following. This will cause a backup & may actually prevent the rear bikes from making it through the light. If the formation is broken for any reason, keep the speed 5-10 miles below the posted speed limit to allow the rest of the formation to catch up. You do not need to stop. *This is a judgment call based on the road & the traffic flow.*
- (h) If the formation is broken, and there is a turn in the route, the formation does need to stop as close to the turn as possible, allowing the trailing group to see where you turned. You may also instruct (*during the pre-ride brief*) that the last person in line wait at the corner to guide the rest up to the formation. This is the Road Captain's decision based on what they know of the route, the current traffic conditions, and safe riding practices.
- (i) Summertime & asphalt do not mix well, kickstands will sink into the asphalt & the bike may fall over. Be aware of where you park.

- (j) All riders need to pay attention to the bikes and traffic around them !!!! There is nothing worse than a bike hitting another bike in formation because they were not paying attention.
- (k) Chapter group rides are supposed to be enjoyable, not racing events. If you need to speed to get to your destination, you should have made better plans & started earlier.
- (l) So what if the Road Captain makes a wrong turn - sometimes that's how you find that hidden special road!!!!!!
- (m) If you think you need to burn a whole tank of gas before you stop for a 5 minute break, you are missing half the fun of riding with a group. The BS sessions at stops are all part of the experience.
- (n) If you know the trip will take 3 hours, plan on it taking 4. Something will always happen to cause a delay. The larger the group, the more time you should allow for rest stops, gas breaks, food breaks, etc.
- (o) One lesson that the MSF class teaches that needs to be clarified is their admonition to always stop with one foot on the ground. Fine, if it is a small bike, but a touring bike should be stopped placing both feet on the ground, at the same time. A slick spot is unforgiving, and very dangerous. Your rear brake can be released if your front brake is holding at 2 MPH. (*Obviously, you do not put your feet down until the bike is fully stopped*). The MSF used to teach that you stop with your RIGHT foot on the ground and the other on the peg. That was changed to LEFT foot down so that you could keep your right foot on the brake. In either case, by definition, your bike is not vertical with only one foot on the ground. If you must make a fast departure (*to get out of somebody's way, for example*), it takes more time to do so with one foot down rather than two. This, because you must straighten the bike as you depart, you have a more erratic start, and you must first take your right foot OFF the brake - all time consuming. If you are stopped at a light on a severe incline, your right foot belongs on the brake pedal. Similarly, in a panic stop situation you want to stop with

your foot still on the rear brake.]

- (p) Assuming you are in the slow or second slowest lane and you approach an on-ramp, do a head check to the right. Equally as important, if you are approaching an off ramp, do a head check to the LEFT (*and catch that guy who is about to cut in front of you to make his exit*).
- (q) Too much following distance can be just as bad as, and frequently is WORSE than too little following distance. If the formation lacks uniformity in what we appear to be doing, then we don't "look" like we are "together" as group. And we become regarded as random individual vehicles in the traffic pattern, and not like a group or unit trying to function as one vehicle. Too much following distance INVITES cars into the formation, splitting it up in traffic. And if we don't control our lane space the cars WILL take it away from us. Be prepared! Non-motorcycling, car drivers really do NOT understand what we do when we ride as a group or why. So, if a car starts to blindly move into or through the group, **LET THEM IN**. We can always re-form the group a little later down the road.

**Footnote:** If you are new to group riding or are uncomfortable riding in a group, please let the Road Captain know. Excessive following distance defeats the purpose of maintaining an equally spaced stagger formation. It is much better for your safety and the safety of the group that you ride individually 1/4 mile behind the group. And we want to encourage you to be comfortable about making that choice.

## 25 Hand Signals:



# MOTORCYCLE HAND SIGNALS



**Left turn**  
Arm and hand extending left, palm facing down



**Right turn**  
Arm out, bent at 90° angle, fist clenched.



**Stop**  
Arm extended straight down, palm facing back.



**Speed Up**  
Arm extended straight out, palm facing up, swing upward.



**Slow Down**  
Arm extended straight out, palm facing down, swing down to your side.



**Follow Me**  
Arm extended straight up from shoulder, palm forward.



**You Lead/Come**  
Arm extended upward 45°, palm forward pointing with index finger, swing in arc from back to front.



**Hazard in Roadway**  
On the left, point with left hand; on the right, point with right foot.



**Single File**  
Arm and index finger extended straight up.



**Double File**  
Arm with index and middle finger extended straight up.



**Comfort Stop**  
Forearm extended, fist clenched with short up and down motion.



**Refreshment Stop**  
Fingers closed, thumb to mouth.



**Turn Signal On**  
Open and close hand with fingers and thumb extended.



**Pull Off**  
Arm positioned as for right turn, forearm swung toward shoulder.



**Cops Ahead**  
Tap on top of helmet with open palm down.



**Fuel**  
Arm out to side pointing to tank with finger extended.

## 26 MSF QUICK TIPS:



### **QUICK TIPS: MSF's Guide to Group Riding**

Motorcycling is primarily a solo activity, but for many, riding as a group – whether with friends on a Sunday morning ride or with an organized motorcycle rally – is the epitome of the motorcycling experience.

Here are some tips to help ensure a fun and safe group ride:

- Arrive prepared. Arrive on time with a full gas tank.
- Hold a riders' meeting. Discuss things like the route, rest and fuel stops, and hand signals (*see diagrams Section 25, pg 22*).
- Assign a lead (*Road Captain*) and sweep rider (*Tail Gunner*). Both should be experienced riders who are well-versed in group riding procedures.
- The leader should be aware of each rider's skill level before the ride and monitor the riders during the ride.
- Keep the group to a manageable size, ideally five to seven riders. If necessary, break the group into smaller sub-groups, separated by a few seconds, each with a lead and sweep rider.
- Ride prepared. At least one rider in each group should have a first-aid kit and full tool kit, and all riders should carry a cell phone, so the group is prepared for any problem that they might encounter.

- Ride in formation. The staggered riding formation (*see diagram Sect 27, pg 25*) allows a proper space cushion between motorcycles so that each rider has enough time and space to maneuver and to react to hazards. The leader rides in the left third of the lane, while the next rider stays at least one second behind in the right third of the lane; the rest of the group follows the same pattern.
- A single-file formation with a minimum 2-second following distance is preferred on a curvy road, under conditions of poor visibility or poor road surfaces, entering/leaving highways, or other situations where an increased space cushion or maneuvering room is needed.<sup>1</sup>
- Avoid side-by-side formations, as they reduce the space cushion. If you suddenly needed to swerve to avoid a hazard, you would not have room to do so. You don't want handlebars to get entangled.
- Periodically check the riders following, using your rear view mirrors.
- If you see a rider falling behind, slow down so they may catch up. If all the riders in the group use this procedure, the group should be able to maintain a fairly steady speed without pressure to ride too fast to catch up.
- If you're separated from the group, don't panic. Your group should have a pre-planned procedure in place to regroup. Don't break the law or ride beyond your skills to catch up.
- For mechanical or medical problems, use a cell phone to call for assistance as the situation warrants.
- If a rider leaves during the ride, the rest of the group should re-form the staggered formation by crisscrossing into the next vacant position. Although it would seem more efficient for the column directly behind the missing rider to move up, we do not recommend it because passing another rider within a lane can be risky.

## 27 LANE POSITION EXAMPLE(S):

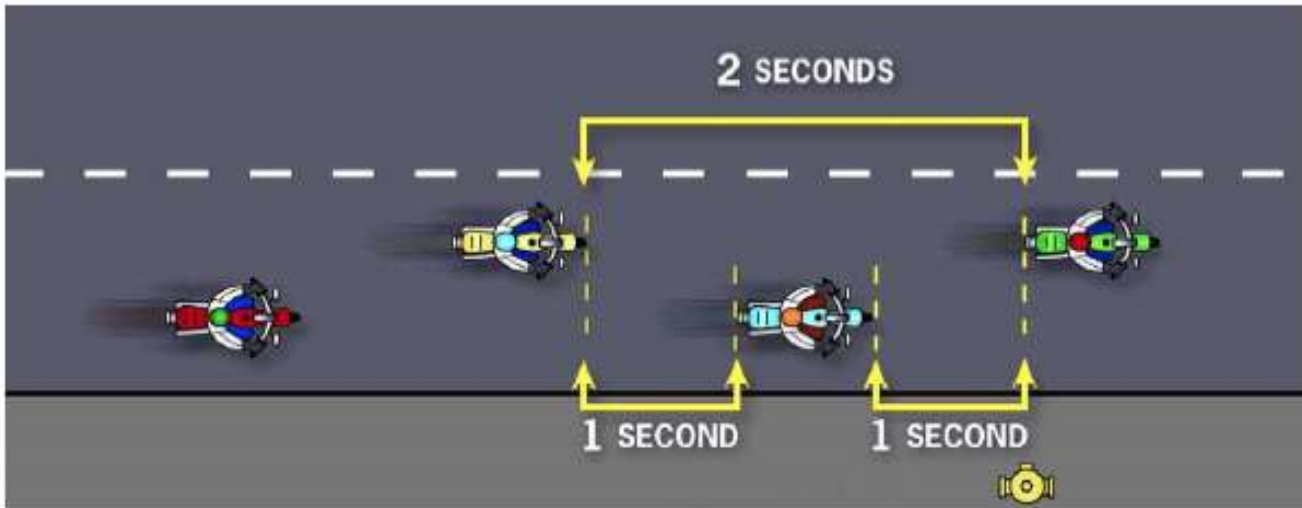


Figure 1

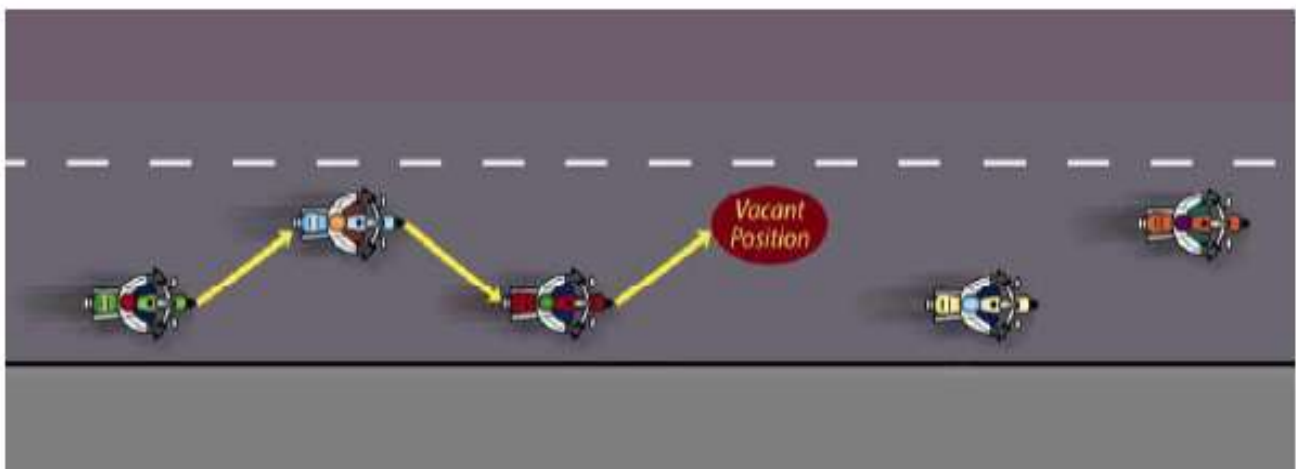


Figure 2

If for any reason a position becomes vacant (*see figure 2*) the riders closest to the dotted line (*as an example in this case*) **DO NOT MOVE UP**. The Rider closest to the rear of the vacant position safely crosses to fill the vacancy. This move is to happen along the entire group, at no time are riders to pass adjacent to one another within a single lane. Riding (*or passing*) side by side in one lane is unsafe and is strictly prohibited in most States!



## 28 MSF (Motorcycle Safety Foundation) PRE-RIDE CHECKLIST:



### 5 things that should be on your pre-ride check list:

- 1. Tires** You want to make sure they are properly inflated because low tire pressure can cause problems from handling distortion to tire failure and affect your fuel consumption. Also inspect for cracked, gashed or worn rubber and find out if there is enough tread left on them in case you come across any wet roads. Double check for any objects like nails or glass which can cause air loss while riding. You should even check the quick release mechanisms that hold your wheels in place and confirm that they are securely fastened so they don't fall off and send you flying over your handlebars.
- 2. Brakes** Now that we know your motorcycle can go, checking your brakes next should be obvious because you're going to want to be able to stop it. Squeeze your brake levers to make sure they handle enough pressure to work in your favor and that you don't have any problems with strained cables. Give a quick visual check on the front and back brake pads to be sure they are hitting the rims and not the tires. You don't want your brake pads to hit the tires when applied because it can damage your sidewalls and launch your over the handlebars. Touching the rims results in a more pleasant and comfortable stop.
- 3. Lights** You want to be seen and be able to see others while riding to help avoid accidents on the road, so making sure your lights work before a ride is important to your safety. Turn on your ignition and check if your headlight's high and low beams work. Then give a quick peek at your taillight and make sure it turns on as well. Next, depress the brake pedal and lever and double check that your brake light works because you always want drivers behind you to know when you are slowing down. Now, do your turn signals work? Check the left and right signals in both the front and back.
- 4. Fluids** You should check your oil levels when your engine is warm and on a center stand. You should also be regularly checking the gaskets, seals and housing for any signs of a leak. Your hydraulic fluid in the brakes and clutch are also important so check the reservoir, master cylinders, calipers and hoses for leaks too. Running out of fuel is never fun either. Keep an eye on the tank and check the carbs (if equipped), lines, and fuel valves for leaks as well.
- 5. Helmet** Make sure to check it before you go out for a ride. Look it over and make sure there are no cracks or dents on the outer shell, the inner padding is still comfortable and chinstrap isn't broken. If any of this is the case, it's time to replace it. One fall on your head will damage the foam on the inside of the helmet and retract its protective ability.

## **CREDITS**

This Guideline has been compiled using several sources from the Internet, Motorcycle Safety Foundation (*MSF*), SCRC and past experience leading group rides.

I want to thank all those that reviewed this document and offered their expertise.

**Remember, this is a GUIDELINE, not a RULE BOOK.**

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**NOTES:**