

## **Group Riding: Why?**

There are several advantages for motorcyclists who ride street bikes in a group:

1. A Group is usually more visible to other drivers than a solo rider.
2. Other vehicles can predict what a rider in a group will do because all members generally maintain fixed positions and fixed intervals between riders.
3. In case of a mechanical problem or an accident, help is available immediately to the rider. A member of the group may carry a cell phone. Usually some riders in a group are trained in First Aid and CPR. They are often aware of safety information and accident management procedures that non-riders may not know. For example, not to remove the helmet of a downed rider; how to manage an accident scene to prevent complications, etc.
4. Riding can be a lot more FUN.

In addition, motorcyclists tend to learn a great deal from each other about their sport. Planning stops along the way offers a fine opportunity to socialize and to share valuable tips and techniques.

## **Group Riding: Why Not?**

Group riding is not for everyone. It requires a certain level of skill and self-discipline. It restricts an individual rider's options as to speed, changes in route and lane positioning. To attempt to ride in a group without having good basic riding skills and a good sense of what others in the group are likely to do—and what they expect you to do—is an invitation to an accident, one that may involve damage and injuries to more than one bike and one rider. It is a matter of personality, in that group riding requires good communication, courtesy among riders and a willingness to look out for the safety of others while riding your own ride. Those who don't wish to ride in a group but who wish to arrive at the same destination as their friends may serve as a scout if they have a CB radio, or they may just prefer to travel solo and meet up with their friends at the day's end.

## **Rules: Who Needs Them?**

The following guidelines for riders in a group are not gospel. There are situations in which they don't apply. Some organizations may have different terms for these concepts. These guidelines have been tested for many miles.

At a group ride, a riders' meeting should be held prior to departure. This meeting is to clarify what is expected of all riders who are participating. If you find yourself uncomfortable with the riding style of a group at any time, DROP OUT. Your safe arrival at your destination is far more important than conforming to rules you don't like or don't understand.

People who ride in a group usually appreciate knowing what they are expected to do, and what to expect from others who are taking part in a hazardous sport in close proximity to them. Road Captains and those who frequently ride lead or drag are particularly urged to become familiar with these terms and guidelines in order to explain them to other riders who may show up for a scheduled ride without having any group riding experience.

## **Some Common Group Riding Terms:**

*Group*: a small number of motorcyclists who ride together maintaining a generally fixed distance between bikes and maintaining fixed positions within the formation (usually no more than six to eight per group). On rides in which participation by a large number of motorcyclists occur, it is common to have riders divided into several groups and to name them Group 1, Group 2, etc. This facilitates radio communication when several groups are listening to the same broadcasts and traffic coordination on the same CB channel.

*Road Captain:* a person who devises group riding rules and guidelines for a chapter of a motorcycling organization, who communicates these guidelines to the chapter, and who generally plans and lays out group rides. The Road Captain may or may not ride lead for a particular ride.

*Lead Bike:* a person who rides in the most forward position in a group and who relays information to all other riders in the group via hand signals and/or CB communication. The Lead Bike determines the group's direction, speed, choice of lane and formation. He/She often must make quick navigation decisions in the face of road hazards, changes in road surface conditions, poor signage, construction and other obstacles while maintaining control of his/her bike and communicating to those following. It is the responsibility of the Lead Bike to select a Drag Bike with whom communication will be coordinated during the ride. If there are three groups on a ride, there will be three Lead Bikes. The Lead Bike should be equipped with a CB when possible.

*Drag Bike:* a person who rides in the last position in a group and who relays information to the Lead Bike regarding the other riders in the group, traffic patterns, equipment problems, etc. The Drag Bike must secure the lane for the rest of the group during lane changes into faster traffic (move first to block oncoming traffic) and to close the door (move to block traffic) when a lane is lost in a merging lane situation. Usually this is the most experienced rider in the group, for the Drag Bike is the rider who stops to assist a rider who has mechanical trouble, loses control or drops out of a ride for some other reason. The Drag Bike should be prepared to render aid to a downed or disabled rider in a group while communicating the problem to the Lead Bike and the others in the group. If at all possible, the Drag Bike should be equipped with a CB and, preferably, will have a co-rider who can assist with communications or traffic control if a serious problem arises. If there are three groups on a ride, there will be three Drag Bikes. The rider in this position is sometimes called the tailgunner.

*Four-wheeler:* any vehicle that is not a motorcycle except an 18-wheeler.

*Group Parking :* a formation in which all bikes in a group follow the Lead Bike in a single file into a parking lot, making a U-turn such that they can all line up next to each other in the space available with the rear of their bikes against the curb or edge of the lot, the front tires pointing outward.

*Parade formation:* a formation in which all the motorcycles in a group ride two abreast.

*Single File:* a formation in which all the motorcyclists in a group ride in one track of a lane.

*Staggered formation:* a formation of motorcyclists in a group in which the Lead Bike rides in the left track of a lane, the next bike in the right track, and the next bike in the left track, and so on. Bikes in the group generally maintain a minimum interval of two seconds travel time between bikes in the same track, and one seconds travel time between each bike in the group. In a staggered formation, a rider still commands and may ride in the entire width of his lane as needed. Group riders may also ride single file or two abreast. The Drag Bike may ride in the left or right track depending on the number of the bikes in the group. It is preferable for the Drag Bike to ride in the left track, so as to have the same visibility line as the Lead Bike.

*Track:* the zone of a lane in which a rider maintains his position in a group. A lane of traffic is divided into five zones: the left track is the second zone from the left, the middle of the lane is the third zone, and the right track is the fourth zone from the left. Two zones on the sides of a lane serve as margins. A rider may vary his or her path of travel from the normal track as is required by a road hazard or by an incursion into the group's lane by other vehicles.

*Two abreast:* a formation in which the members of a group ride adjacent to each other in pairs, used when riding in parade formation. Used after stopping at signs and traffic signals so that riders can get through an intersection quickly and together if possible. *Note: bike in the right track should stop when rider is aligned with passenger seat of bike in the left. This allows the rider on the left to have full view of traffic conditions.* When departing from a stop, the rider in the left track normally pulls out before the rider in the right, returning to a staggered formation.

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