

GROUP RIDING

Group riding tips.....	37
Formation riding	39
Tips for touring	41
H.O.G. [®] chapter alcohol guidelines.....	42



GROUP RIDING

Few activities build camaraderie and memories faster than chapter rides. They are one of the core H.O.G.[®] chapter activities. That's why it's so important that they're conducted safely. This section contains tips on planning group rides, standard hand signals and a discussion of formation riding techniques.

GROUP RIDING

GROUP RIDING TIPS

There are a number of factors that come into play when planning or participating in a group ride. Here are some suggestions for making your rides safe and successful.

PLANNING THE RIDE

It's always a good idea to prepare a map of the route with all the stops indicated. If some bikes become separated from the group, they can catch up at the next stop.

- If you're not out for a scenic ride, plan the most direct route to an event or activity.
- If you're out for a scenic ride, be sure traffic conditions will allow it.
- Plan stops to avoid gravel parking and left-hand turns (or right-hand turns in countries that drive on the left, such as the UK). No one likes gravel, and in a group it's even less fun. Turns in and out of stops will help the group stay together.
- Plan petrol stops so folks with smaller tanks can fill up and stay with the group.
- If you have a large group stopping at a restaurant, call the restaurant far enough in advance to allow them to prepare for a large group.
- If you expect a particularly large group and it's possible to get a police escort or traffic control at the start/end of a ride or along the route, great! Otherwise, it is a good idea to at least inform the police department of your plans and perhaps drop off a map. Never block traffic yourself; it is against the law!

LEADING THE RIDE

Choose and maintain a comfortable pace within the speed limit.

- Keep in mind that people at the end of the group may have to ride a little faster to keep up if there are gaps in the group.
- It may also may cause a problem to ride too slowly. Drivers in vehicles behind the group may become impatient and try to get around the group.
- Know the route well enough so that you can give the group plenty of notice that you are approaching a turn.
- Always signal your intention to turn or change lanes. If you find yourself at an intersection too quickly for the entire group to make the turn safely, continue until you locate a place where the entire group can execute the turn safely.

GROUP RIDING

GROUP RIDING TIPS *(cont'd)*

PARTICIPATING IN A RIDE

Drinking and riding never mix. This is especially true when participating in a group ride.

- Always ride in staggered formation; it gives you an extra margin for safety.
- Make sure your vehicle is in good operating condition. For example, a bad tyre could cause an accident on a group ride.
- Being too hot or too cold can also affect how alert you are as a driver. Be sure to wear appropriate protective clothing, such as a long-sleeve cotton shirt (for protection from the sun), helmet, eye protection, leather jacket, gloves, etc.
- A group of motorcycles is not considered a single vehicle. Be courteous. Generally speaking, a car will not want to ride in the middle of a group of motorcycles and will get out of the group as quickly as possible.
- Familiarise yourself with the route and scheduled stops.
- Arrive to participate in a group ride with a full tank of petrol.

EMERGENCY STOPPING

Ride with a partner. In the event someone needs to pull over for an unscheduled stop, the partner should also stop in case assistance is needed.

- It's unsafe for a large group to stop on the side of the road. If someone needs to pull over, the remainder of the group should continue to the next stop. At that time, the group can decide to wait for the missing members or to send two riders back to assist.
- If the group has a standing policy to wait for a specified period of time, say half an hour, the members left behind will be aware that they can catch up.
- All riders should have a map of the route so they can reach their destination on their own if need be.

GROUP RIDING

FORMATION RIDING

STAGGERED RIDING

The lead motorcycle should be in one third of lane, the second motorcycle should be in the other opposite third of the lane, one second behind the first rider, and so on.

- Leave enough room between each motorcycle so that any rider can manoeuvre to the right or left without hitting anyone else.
- Always stay in line with the bike in front of you. Do not switch between the left and right side of the lane.



SINGLE-FILE RIDING

All motorcycles ride in a single line, two seconds behind one another, in either the right or left third of the lane. The lead rider determines on which side of the lane the group will ride.



OVERTAKING

Overtaking should always be undertaken one motorcycle at a time, in staggered formation. Remember, passing at any time can be hazardous. Use common sense.

PASSING OTHER VEHICLES

- **Pre-pass position** - be far enough behind the vehicle you are passing to see clearly down the road to do an 'oncoming traffic check'.
- **Signal** - if you have a passenger, he or she should signal as well.
- **Check your mirrors** - then turn your head to check your blind spot and ensure that no one is passing you.
- **Accelerate and change lanes** - remember, legally, you can't exceed the speed limit.
- **When returning to your lane** - signal and make a mirror check and head check to be sure there is space between you and all other vehicles. Return to your lane and turn off your indicator.

GROUP RIDING

FORMATION RIDING *(cont'd)*

AFTER MAKING THE PASS

The lead rider makes the lane change until he can clearly see that the other riders have made their lane changes.

KEEP THE GROUP TOGETHER

- **Plan** - the leader should look ahead for changes and signal early so the word gets back in plenty of time. Start lane changes early to permit everyone to complete the change. Put novice riders or those new to group riding at or near the back unless the riders wish to ride elsewhere.
- **Follow those behind** - let the tailender set the pace. Use your mirrors to keep an eye on the person behind. If a rider falls behind, everyone should slow down a little to stay with the tailender.
- **Know the route** - make sure everyone knows the route. Then if someone is separated they won't have to hurry to keep from getting lost or taking a wrong turn.

GROUP RIDING

TIPS FOR TOURING

Motorcycling is an exciting and practical way to get around. But, like any other activity, it has risks. The reality is that you are exposed and vulnerable; it is up to you to avoid accidents and injury. Risk – and how you treat it – is what safe cycling is all about. To help you reduce and manage risk, use the following tips as a guide:

- When in a tight curve, the rider on the outside of the curve should give room to the rider on the inside. This prevents excessive crowding if the curve is too tight.
- Use the buddy system when riding. If your buddy has trouble and must pull out of the group, pull off the road with him or her and offer any assistance you can.
- Keep a safe distance behind the bike in front of you. Know the stopping distance of your motorcycle.
- Try to maintain a constant speed. Don't 'rubber band' (speed up and slow down).
- Be aware of openings as you ride so that you will have some place to manoeuvre in case of an emergency. Also, be aware of the riders around you, especially the one to your side, and give each other as much room as possible.
- Always try to keep the pack tight without crowding each other. Stay close through intersections and traffic lights so that the group doesn't become separated. Remember that some riders in the group may not know where they are going and could end up 'leading' the remainder of the pack with no idea how to reach their destination.
- If there is a vehicle that needs to get on to the motorway, let that vehicle through and close the gap.
- Never ride in someone's blind spot.
- Remember, you're not safe from lightning on your bike.

GROUP RIDING

H.O.G.® CHAPTER ALCOHOL GUIDELINES



H.O.G.® CHAPTER ALCOHOL GUIDELINES

Safe and responsible motorcycling activity is a major H.O.G.® goal. In this regard:

- The consumption and use of alcohol is a serious personal responsibility involving the safety and welfare of family, riding friends and the individual H.O.G. member.
- Alcohol consumption before or during motorcycling activity is not safe or responsible behaviour.
- H.O.G. has no direct operational control over chapter operations. Consumption of alcohol after riding activity or at non-riding events is a matter to be decided by the sponsoring dealership and H.O.G. chapter leadership. All such decisions are subject to final review and approval by the sponsoring dealership.
- If the sponsoring dealer and chapter decide that alcohol may be consumed at a chapter activity, then the recommended approach is either to "Bring Your Own" or to "Buy Your Own" from a vendor licensed and insured to sell alcohol.

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GROUP RIDING

H.O.G.[®] CHAPTER ALCOHOL GUIDELINES *(cont'd)*

WHO'S RESPONSIBLE FOR WHOM?

The other day, I received a call from a chapter officer who had observed one of the local chapter members drinking to excess during a stop on a chapter ride. An awkward situation, to say the least, and a potentially lethal one. His question to me was: "What am I required to do as a chapter officer?" And, he added, "You should warn us about these things!" He's right, and he brings up a good question.

First, consider an ounce of prevention; don't make bars a stopping place for meetings or rides. Harley[®] dealerships, parks or restaurants are all good options. Always make sure an alternative to alcohol is available whenever you stop - there are some pretty good non-alcoholic beers out there today!

Second, discuss the issue with your sponsoring dealer, chapter officers and members before problems occur, at a monthly meeting or prior to the ride. Emphasise that each one of us is responsible for our own behaviour, and we also have a responsibility to those with whom we ride. If you think through what you would do if ever confronted with a member who isn't fit to ride, you'll have a better chance of achieving a positive outcome.

Third, as a chapter officer, set an example. At the H.O.G.[®] Officer Training, a chapter director told us his tactic. If they have a member who has partied too hard, several chapter officers approach the individual, calmly point out the danger the person is posing both to him or herself and to other chapter members, ask for the keys, and arrange for alternative transportation by taxi or private vehicle. They've reported that this technique works well.

Beyond this, there's not much you can - or should - do. As H.O.G. members and riders, we tend to want to 'take care of our own' without involving outside authorities - a philosophy I myself hold to.

H.O.G. is about getting together to ride and have fun. Personally, I like to party and I love to ride, so when I'm on my bike I don't party until the bike is safely bedded down for the night; and judging from the good times I've had, it's a system that seems to work.

By Heidi Zogg