

Rubberbanding

One item that I didn't see in the rules is something I have noticed on every organized charity ride I have been on. It is what is sometimes called "Rubberbanding".

This is when you are riding in group formation but one rider fails to maintain the constant rate of speed the other riders are traveling and repeatedly keeps racing ahead then slowing down. This causes everyone behind the rubberbander to speed up and slow down too.

Rubberbanding is *very* annoying and should be avoided (unless you would enjoy having a very embarrassing picture of yourself posted on the weekend Bikers website). People don't even realize they are doing it so please take notice just in case.

Motorcycle (Group) Ride Rules/Observances

Group motorcycle riding is a great experience when common sense, respect for other riders, and **safety** prevail. Please review these riding rules and tips for your personal and group riding safety.

Do not mix alcohol and motorcycle riding at anytime, especially when riding in a group.

No **attitudes** while with the group. A diversity of people ride. Motorcyclists are very diverse. We just share the love of riding.

Top-off your gas tank before you begin a ride. Bikes with small gas tanks have to stop more often. Decide **before** you begin when and where you will stop. Inform everyone of designated stops.

Do a personal and bike **safety check** before beginning a ride. Bikes should be in good running condition before riding (anytime).

Riders should wear **eye protection**, and a DOT/Snell certified **helmet**. This is law in many states, e.g., Michigan (May 2006).

Group Riding

Riders who choose to ride in a group must do just that, **ride with the group**. If a navigational mistake is made (e.g., missed turn or exit), continue with the group until the error can be **safely** corrected. It is recommended to have Ride Captain(s) travel the route prior to a run, thus, avoiding navigation mistakes.

As in the military, **formation** is mandatory. Two-up is the typical ride arrangement (riding staggered). The more experienced rider should ride on the left...not the person with the biggest ego. (Loud pipes on the right!)

Motorcycles with a passenger should ride on the right when possible. All **passengers** should know their riding assignment prior to the ride. Alternate bikes for passengers should also be chosen. New riders should never have a passenger.

Maintain approximately **two bike lengths** between bikes; weather and road conditions permitting.

If a vehicle wants to break through the group on a multi-lane road, give them space to safely do so. Close formation once the vehicle exits the lane. If the vehicle does not move, cautiously and carefully pass to reform. Bikers do not own the road. Be considerate of other vehicles. Give them space.

Novice and inexperienced riders should ride in the middle of the group until they are comfortable riding in a group. The Ride Captain(s) or those who have ridden the route should ride up front...again, not riders with big egos. Experienced riders should also be the rear of the group...this is done to maintain order.

Know **hand signals**, and pay attention to them. **Signals** are passed back by every rider so that everyone is informed. Be certain it is a real signal, and not a **wave** to a passing motorcycle.

Maintain a **steady pace** with as few (dramatic) speed changes or sudden moves as possible. Changing lanes on a freeway should be done from the rear then moving forward to the clear lane. Ride as if your motorcycle were as long as the entire group.

If two groups merge, let the **lead group lead**.

Motorcycles with sidecars (and trikes) ride at the rear or front of the group.

Turns and Turning

When turning left, the right lead bike should safely block oncoming traffic.

The group should continue through a red light only if blockers have the intersection secured. If blockers are not used, be sure the riders behind you know that you intend to stop.

When a single file signal is given, the bike on the left proceeds (in front of) the bike on the right.

Blockers

Blocking intersections is **risky** and very often, an unsafe practice. However, an exception is an escorted ride. If you block, review these:

Blockers should wear a brightly colored safety vest to be more visible. Turn headlights toward oncoming traffic when blocking, and use 4-way flashers. Urge riders to tighten up and move as quickly as possible through blocked intersections.

Have a procedure for getting blockers to the front from the rear. Blockers should always be chosen from more experienced riders in a group.

Rear Ride Captains should pull out and block the lane before a group lane change occurs. When a lane change is signaled, do not move until the rider in front of you moves.

The group should know who is blocking. **Do not follow blockers!** Caravan vehicles should never block unless asked by the Ride Captain.

Weather and Road Conditions

Inclement weather can be disruptive and discomforting. If the weather is too severe, take shelter.

Be extra cautious when rain first begins to fall. The road is slickest at that time. Avoid riding on the "glossy" (oil stained) area of the road at all times, but especially during or after a rain.

Stones on the road are dangerous...be careful. Gravel behaves like ball bearings on a hard surface.

Avoid potholes when you can safely do so. Potholes can damage bike rims and cause accidents. Signal others with a finger pointing down of road hazards.

Mechanical/electrical breakdowns can happen to any motorcycle. Designate someone to help, or have someone with a tool kit and cell phone stop to help the problem motorcycle. Other riders should continue the run.

Accidents

In the event of an accident, pull over with the group. Do not **panic stop** or rush to the scene. This may cause more problems. Do not move an injured person or remove their helmet. Do not allow a tow truck to take the downed bike. Locate a safe place to leave the motorcycle until a motorcycle hauler can pick it up.

Security and Parking

Participants in a ride may be required to watch motorcycles (if necessary) for a short time, in pairs.

When parking, the leaders should direct the bikes to an area **out of the traffic pattern**. No one wants their bike side swiped or damaged by passing vehicles. Leaving a parking area should be done with caution, and consideration of others exiting... blockers may be needed to promote safe egress.

Law Enforcement

If the police stop the group, the Ride Captain should lead the group to a safe place. Riders should stay in formation (by or on their motorcycle). Allow the officer come to you. The Ride Captain should be the only one who approaches the officer and should promptly identify him/herself.

Responsibility

A group, organization, or club is not responsible for accidents, injuries, thefts, etc. Each individual is responsible for any violation of the law. Riders ride at their own risk.

The group should meet **before and during** the ride regularly to pass along information. If you do not understand something, get clarification.

Experienced riders should get to know riders with whom they are riding. Encourage new riders to be cautious and to ride at the group pace...not unsafely or beyond their personal comfort level.

The group should ride to their destination in formation. If a motorcycle does not wish to stay with the group at the end or during the ride, wait until all bikes are parked before leaving the group.

If you leave your place in the group, re-enter at the rear, in front of the rear Ride Captains.

Riding in an unsafe manner with a group should not be tolerated. The safety of the group is everyone's responsibility. It is a rider's obligation to report noncompliance of any group-riding rule to a Ride Captain...a life may depend on it. Showoffs and hot rods should not ride in a group.

Know and ride by these rules, or do not ride with a group. **Safe riding is a group priority.**

Relevant Questions:

What is a safety cushion?

What is the three (3) second rule?

What makes an experienced rider?

How often should you look in your mirror?

How should a Ride Captain handle a safety violation?

Is it better to ride in a large group, or several smaller groups with an equal share of experienced riders?

Who is in charge of the ride, and where is the destination (and stops)?