

# Riding Guidelines

## CONTENTS

I. RESPONSIBILITIES	V. FOLLOWING DISTANCES	X. ACCIDENTS
II. STAGING	VI. TRAFFIC LANES	XI. HAND SIGNALS
III. FORMATION	VII. LANE CHANGES & PASSING	XII. SAFETY EQUIPMENT
IV. GROUP SPEED	VIII. ROUTINE STOPS	XIII. TIPS & EXPERIENCE
	IV. EMERGENCY STOPS	

The intent of this guideline is to provide the **Southern Cruisers Riding Club** Chapters and SCRC members information to help 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.

These guidelines cannot encompass every possible set of circumstances, and they are intended to serve as a basic guide for most situations. Each person is therefore expected to read, understand, and apply these guidelines, using their best judgment.

Please remember that YOU have the ultimate responsibility for YOUR safety, and always ride within your capabilities and that of your machines.

While this guideline states that the Road Captain is in charge, it is the 1<sup>st</sup> Officer and/or the 2<sup>nd</sup> Officer of the Chapter that are overall in charge of their chapter and all functions concerning the chapter. This includes rides. All the officers should be intimately familiar with this guide and the safe riding practices.

(Note: Ride Leader may be substituted for Road Captain.)

(Yes, as you read through this, there are many things repeated, for emphasis.)

### ALL GROUP RIDERS' RESPONSIBILITIES

- 1) Will observe the objectives and guidelines in order to assure the safety and the welfare of every individual within the group, and any surrounding motorists or pedestrians.
- 2) Will follow the instructions of the Road Captain in all situations, unless those instructions place the rider or any other individual in an unsafe situation.
- 3) Will maintain their motorcycle and other equipment in a safe riding condition.
- 4) Will ride with headlights on or IAW the state laws.
- 5) Will 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.
- 6) Will ride with a helmet where the state law requires a helmet.
- 7) Each individual rider is 100% responsible for:
  - a) Safely operating their vehicle in accordance with all applicable Federal, State and local laws.
  - b) Making sure that they and their vehicle are un-impaired, and are currently functioning safely.
  - c) Making sure that they can perform and maneuver safely in the riding environment that they are in. Should they be not 100% sure of their ability in the current ride, they must remove themselves from the situation. At all times, each rider must ride within their capabilities.
  - d) Sections (a) - (c) above and thus, ultimately, their own safety, actions and/or lack of action. It is the duty of every rider to make sure the environment is safe for themselves as well as for other riders. In doing so, every ride will be as safe as possible.
- 8) The Southern Cruisers Riding Club does not condone drinking and riding. Anyone participating in a Southern Cruisers ride or event who consumes alcoholic beverages or any other substance that may impair their ability to operate a motorcycle or any other motor vehicle does so without the consent of the Southern Cruisers Riding Club. Everyone that participates in a Southern Cruisers ride or event must follow the laws regarding driving under the influence set forth by the state(s) within which that ride or event will take place.
- 9) The Southern Cruisers Riding Club requires all members to follow and observe all State and Local Laws while participating in a Southern Cruisers Event. The Southern Cruisers does not condone any illegal activities or practices while riding in or holding an event or ride including but not limited to parading and road blocking. Whenever possible, event or ride organizers will coordinate with their local law enforcement or department of transportation for their assistance in road blocking for large processions. If law enforcement assistance is not available, large groups must be split into smaller groups that will be manageable without blocking any intersection, streets or drives. Any violation of this article will be reviewed by the Board of Directors and/or the National Officers and could lead to dismissal from the Southern Cruisers.
- 10) Any officer recognized by the constitution for the Southern Cruisers Riding Club may dismiss anyone participating in a Southern Cruisers ride or event if they are impaired or are endangering the safety of ride participants. Ultimately it is the individuals responsibility to maintain themselves in a safe and lawful manner.

### MEETING PLACE AND DEPARTURE TIME

- 1) Meeting place and departure times will be posted to the membership either by e-mail or phone preceding the scheduled event.
- 2) Rider briefing should be held just 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 and procedures.
- 3) Individuals should make every effort to arrive promptly at the scheduled meeting time and be completely prepared for the scheduled departure time. This includes a full tank of gas, and necessary restroom visits.

### RIDING FORMATION AND INDIVIDUAL POSITIONS

- 1) The standard formation, under good conditions of road, traffic, and weather, will be a double row, staggered, in one traffic lane. The 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.

- 2) The SCRC 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.
- 3) New members, guests, and any riders with little experience in group riding will be positioned at the front of the group, just behind the Road Captain.
- 4) Each rider should maintain his or her starting line up 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, and is particularly important for the new or inexperienced riders.
- 5) 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.
- 6) 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.
- 7) This may mean that the last rider of each group would 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 run as to his or her responsibilities in the event this situation should occur.
- 8) It is recommended that trikes and bikes with sidecars be to the rear of the formation and ride single file at all times ahead of the Tail Gunner.

## GROUP SPEED

- 1) The Road Captain will attempt to establish and maintain a uniform speed; consistent with the ability of the least experienced rider, surrounding conditions, the posted speed limit, the bikes at the ride, and safe riding practices. The Road Captain should establish before the ride the abilities of the people and the bikes themselves prior to departure, especially concentrating on new riders, new members and visitors to the ride. The Road Captain should continually check his mirrors to insure the formation is in good shape.
- 2) 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.
- 3) All riders will make an effort to maintain the same speed to minimize the effect of irregular speeds on riders at the rear of the group.
- 4) All riders will maintain a safe distance and lane position between themselves and the rider directly ahead; to be consistent with existing road, traffic, and weather conditions.

## MINIMUM SAFE FOLLOWING DISTANCES

- 1) 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. The riders should also realize that by creating a large gap in the formation, cars will try to move in and split the formation, causing a dangerous situation. It also causes problems for the Road Captain when there are large gaps in the formation.
- 2) Too many people get hung up with, 'there must be only 2 seconds between bikes. 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 gap there should be. With that said, we also do not want huge gaping gaps in the formation where other vehicles will attempt to break into the formation. The gap should be consistent throughout the formation.
- 3) 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 (ref. NOTE below). If a car in front of the formation, make adjustments to keep a good distance.
- 4) A safe lane position is defined as riding immediately to the right or left of lane center. This will keep the riders just off the center oil stain, while maintaining the staggered formation, distance between riders and other obstacles, and not obstructing the line of vision between the Road Captain and Tail Gunner.

## TRAFFIC LANES

The Road Captain will attempt to lead the group in a single lane when:

- 1) 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.
- 2) On highways with two lanes each direction, the group will normally travel in the number two lane, also known as the "SLOW" lane, (ref. Note below) allowing faster traffic to pass to left, except when passing slower traffic on the right.
- 3) 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.

## LANE CHANGES AND PASSING

- 1) On a multi-lane highway, the double row staggered formation will normally be maintained.
- 2) The Road Captain will hold his or her position and signal for a lane change.
- 3) All riders will hold their positions and pass the signal to the rear.
- 4) 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. Make a head check to insure no cars are beside the formation.
- 5) 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, and change lanes first followed by all other riders moving from the front to the rear of the group.
- 6) There are times it will not be possible for the entire group to change lanes as above. When this situation arises, the Road Captain will signal for a turn, and signal the group with one finger extended into the air. This indicates that changing lanes as a group is not possible. The Road Captain will then change lanes when safe to do so. Everyone signals, head checks, 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 known good safety practices, INCLUDING HEAD CHECKS.
- 7) 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.
- 8) If for any reason the group becomes separated, merge safely back into the formation, returning to your original position,

using known good safety practices. Don't feel it's necessary to break the world land speed record in trying to catch up. The Road Captain will be aware and adjust accordingly once they are clear of the passed vehicle.

## **GAS, FOOD, REST STOPS, AND TOLLS**

- 1) If necessary, due to the length of the trip, gas, food, and rest stops should be discussed and scheduled prior to departure. These scheduled stops should be adhered to as much as possible, depending on varying conditions as the trip progresses.
- 2) Deviation from the scheduled stops may be required due to varying weather, traffic, and bladder conditions (availability of gas, rider fatigue, and other unforeseen circumstances).
- 3) Gas and rest stops should be limited to no more than ten to fifteen minutes, depending on the size of the group and based on the ride plan. Remember the last rider in the group waits the longest, therefore has the shortest rest period.
- 4) 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.

## **UNSCHEDULED OR EMERGENCY STOPS**

- 1) Unscheduled stops for gas, restroom, or rider fatigue can lead to confusion in the group, and confusion can lead to accidents. The SCRC 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.
- 2) Any rider with an equipment problem should inform one of the Officers, Road Captain or Tail Gunner as quickly, and as safely as possible.
- 3) When the Road Captain is informed, he or she will stop the group at the earliest possible moment, when and where it is safe.
- 4) 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.
- 5) 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.
- 6) The Road Captain should use good judgement and common sense when choosing a spot to pull over. Try to avoid an area with hazards to motorcycles, such as heavy traffic, broken glass, trash, loose sand, gravel, and fresh asphalt.

## **ACCIDENTS**

- 1) 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 known good safety practices). It may be necessary for the group to disperse and park separately to avoid creating additional hazardous conditions.
- 2) Members of the Southern Cruisers will provide assistance in any practical way possible, including, but not limited to:
  - a) Slow, divert, or stop traffic in a safe manner, using flares if available.
  - b) Aid and comfort those involved.
  - c) Call 911 to notify the Police, Ambulance, and or Fire service as the situation demands.
  - d) Maintain order and preserve the accident scene for Police investigation.
  - e) If possible, take photographs.
  - f) If possible, obtain license plate numbers and vehicle descriptions, including driver descriptions in the event of a hit and run violation.
  - g) Obtain names and addresses of witnesses, if necessary.
  - h) If possible, maintain overall control of the situation until relieved by the proper authorities.

## **HAND SIGNALS**

- 1) 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, and pointing out road hazards. Turn signal lights will also be used at all times.
- 2) All signals will be relayed to the rear of the group to allow all riders to take appropriate precautionary measures, and be 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, based on following traffic.
- 3) Hand signals will be used at all times, to point out road hazards to following riders by pointing. In some cases, pointing out a road hazard will work just as well.
- 4) Left arm held high, one finger extended over head indicates single file, and extended following distance.
- 5) Left arm held high, one finger extended over head, followed by the Road Captain signaling and changing lanes indicates:
  - a) The Road Captain will move as an individual to whatever maneuver or position is required.
  - b) The group will follow as individuals, in a "follow the leader" approach, signaling and following the Road Captain as appropriate and safe.
- 6) Left arm held high with two fingers extended over head indicates the standard staggered formation.
- 7) Left arm held low and to the side, palm facing backwards, indicates slow and or stop.

## **SAFETY EQUIPMENT**

- 1) As mentioned previously, it is assumed that all riders will come to the ride with a well-maintained motorcycle.
- 2) All riders should show up with appropriate riding apparel for the weather conditions.
- 3) All group riders are encouraged to bring a well-stocked tool kit to all club rides.
- 4) All group riders are encouraged to bring a well-maintained first aid kit to all club rides.
- 5) The SCRC Road Captain should bring the following to the ride:
  - a) First aid kit.
  - b) Route maps.
  - c) Run information.
  - d) 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.

## TIPS AND PAST EXPERIENCE

Nothing can replace Good Judgement and Common Sense !!!!!

- 1) It is recommended for the Road Captain to have scouted the route prior to conducting the ride.
- 2) Be aware of places you may have to stop. Watch for loose gravel or sand.
- 3) The arrows painted on the lanes indicating the lane traffic flow become slick when wet.
- 4) Watch for oil slicks around stop lights, stop signs or around areas where cars may have to sit for a period of time.
- 5) The use of 2-way radios between the Road Captain and Tail Gunner is Highly Recommended.
- 6) When pulling out from a stop sign or stop light and after making a turn, an even, steady acceleration is highly recommended. This will keep the formation together better than speeding up and having to slow back down. Do not slow to make sure the formation is following. This will cause a back up and may actually prevent the rear bikes from making it through the light. If the formation is broken for whatever reason, keep the speed limit to 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 judgement call based on the road and the traffic flow).
- 7) 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 (prior to the ride in the pre-ride brief) that the last person in line wait at the corner to guide the rest back up to the formation. This is the Road Captain's decision based on what they know of the route, the traffic, and safe riding practices.
- 8) Summer time and asphalt do not mix well, kickstands will sink in and the bike may fall over. Be aware of where you park.
- 9) 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.
- 10) If you need to speed to get to your destination you should have made better plans and started earlier. Chapter group rides are supposed to be enjoyable not racing events.
- 11) Riders - So what if the Road Captain makes a wrong turn. Sometimes that's how you find that hidden special road!!!!!!
- 12) If you think you need to burn a whole tank of gas before you stop for a 5 min break, you are missing half the fun of riding with a group. The BS sessions at stops are all part of the experience.
- 13) 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.
- 14) One lesson that the MSF class teaches that I think needs to be clarified better 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, in my opinion. A slick spot is unforgiving and very dangerous. Your rear brake can be released if your front brake is holding at 2 MPH with no concerns whatever. (Obviously, you do not put 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. Finally, you can probably more easily handle a smaller bike with one leg, but a large touring bike is another case entirely. There are always exceptions to the rule, of course. 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.
- 15) 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).
- 16) REMEMBER! 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. 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 Southern Cruisers Ride, please let the Road Captain know. Excessive following distance defeats the purpose of maintaining an equally spaced stagger formation. If you are new to group riding or have a handicap (visual, etc.) and prefer/need to ride on the left or right side of the lane, let the Road Captain know in advance. Also, make sure you line up in the proper position for where you need to be (odd-numbered bikes will ride on the left and even-numbered bikes will ride on the right). If you need to switch with another bike, do so before the ride begins and explain to them why you are doing so. If necessary, until you become more comfortable with group riding, it may be much better for your safety and the safety of the group that you ride individually 1/4 mile behind the group. We want to encourage you to be comfortable about making that choice.

- 17) Any SCRC member that needs 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.
- 18) BLOCKING. Remember, the cars on the road have the right of way and blocking is considered illegal. The Southern Cruisers Riding Club does not approve of the use of blocking, it is illegal in most States. If there is a need to block traffic, it should only be done with prior arrangements with the local law enforcement officials. It may take a few extra moments to wait for the traffic to clear. This will keep the formation together and safer. If the formation does get split up ' refer to the section on rejoining the formation.
- 19) STOPS AT TRAFFIC LIGHTS. Keep your bike in first gear and ready to move when the light turns green, unless you know that it will be an extremely long red light and need to give your hand a rest. The few seconds' delay for shifting from neutral to first gear can cause the group to be split because not everyone is able to make it through a turn signal.
- 20) INTERSTATE/HIGHWAYS. When approaching the interstate or a limited access highway, you should gradually increase your speed while on the entrance ramp as you see that you'll be able to merge on to the interstate. Depending upon the size of the group, the Tail Gunner may not be able to move over and protect the lane for the entire group. COMMON SENSE AND GOOD JUDGMENT WILL NEED TO BE USED TO DETERMINE IF YOU WILL BE ABLE TO MERGE SAFELY. Do not assume that since the Road Captain and several bikes have merged on to the highway that it will be safe. If the group is separated, regroup when it is safe to do so.
- 21) EXITING INTERSTATES/HIGHWAYS. When you are leaving the interstate or highway, try to maintain a speed that will allow all of the bikes to exit without being on the interstate and having to ride at an extremely low speed. Move fully on to the exit ramp or turning lane as quickly as possible. To properly protect the group, the Tail Gunner cannot move over until every bike is safely on the exit ramp or in the turning lane.
- 22) TUNNELS. The Blue Ridge Parkway is a favorite place to ride for many local and out of state riders. Numerous tunnels exist on the parkway. Some are over 1/4 mile long. There is no lighting in Parkway tunnels. Cars are required to turn on lights, but some don't. On a motorcycle, the instant of going from sunlight to darkness is disorienting. Your eyes are not used to the dark. The first thing you do is instinctively brake a little. 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, bicyclists may be encountered in tunnels as well. WHEN APPROACHING TUNNELS, SLOW FAR AHEAD OF TIME, ALLOW MORE SPACE BETWEEN RIDERS, GET INTO SINGLE FILE AND STAY AWAY FROM THE YELLOW LINE. You may encounter one tunnel after another so maintain this safe riding posture as long as you are in "Tunnel areas" of the parkway.

- 23) CURVES. Many roads in the mountain are switchbacks, with non-stop sharp curves. You are riding along at 40 mph, come into the curve and you are down to 15. With a tight curve, riders behind you cannot see that you braked, or have little room to brake and slow, so it is easy to get bunched up. ALWAYS STAY IN SINGLE FILE, MAINTAIN GREATER SPACING BETWEEN RIDERS AND PAY ATTENTION. A group of H.O.G riders were riding on the parkway. The lead bike missed a sharp curve, left the parkway and went over the side of the mountain and fell 60 feet, resulting in a rider's death and a critically injured passenger. Riders in the group said that it appeared the rider, while entering a sharp curve, looked away for a second and then missed the curve. Many areas on the parkway and other mountain roads are like riding on the edge of a cliff - you miss your turn and you are airborne without a parachute! It's not the fall -it's that sudden stop at the end that'll get ya.

Also be aware that after heavy rains on these kinds of roads in the mountains, that sand and mud will be washed down onto the road and can make the curves and corners very dangerous.

There are many opinions on curves. A lot depends on how sharp the curve is. This, IMO, 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. Several groups have established signals to spread out the gap and this works well before going into curves to allow more freedom for the individual riders to have more space to work with. 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 there are sharp curves, I would recommend single file spaced 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.

I highly recommend that the Road Captain be aware of the riding experience of the people they are leading on a ride. A pre-ride of the route (when possible) is also recommended. It is also up to the individual rider to admit to his/her abilities.

**Compiled By - Greg "Dragon" Love**