

**TEXAS HILL COUNTRY CHAPTER
HARLEY OWNERS GROUP
GROUP RIDING GUIDELINES**

INTRODUCTION

People join clubs such as the Texas Hill Country Chapter H.O.G. because they want to ride their Harleys with like-minded Harley owners. Group riding requires all riders to follow some basic safety rules. The guidelines in this handout are intended to make your ride both enjoyable and safe. Safety is the most important part of the ride.

Riding a motorcycle is inherently riskier than driving a car. We have developed some rules and guidelines for group riding to reduce these risks. Most of these rules and guidelines are common sense and good road manners. They allow a large number of riders with a wide range skills and experience to ride together safely. If you find these guidelines and rules to be too restrictive for your style of riding or you are not ready for group riding, we invite you to ride on your own route and meet us at the ride destination.

The Staging Area

Arrive at the staging area (departure location) at least 15 minutes before the published departure time. Be sure your motorcycle is in safe and reliable running condition. Have a full tank of gas. Be well-rested. Be focused on the upcoming ride. A Road Captain will normally give his briefing 10-15 minutes before the departure time. Then the group will depart.

The staging area for the monthly chapter meeting ride will usually be the location of the monthly meeting. The lead Road Captain for the ride will brief all members who will be going on the ride. After this briefing members will move to the designated location for their group where they will meet with the RCs for their group.

New (group) riders may be placed in a particular spot in the group. Together, the new rider and Road Captain will pick the spot. Riders on trikes and riders with sidecars will normally be placed at the rear of the group.

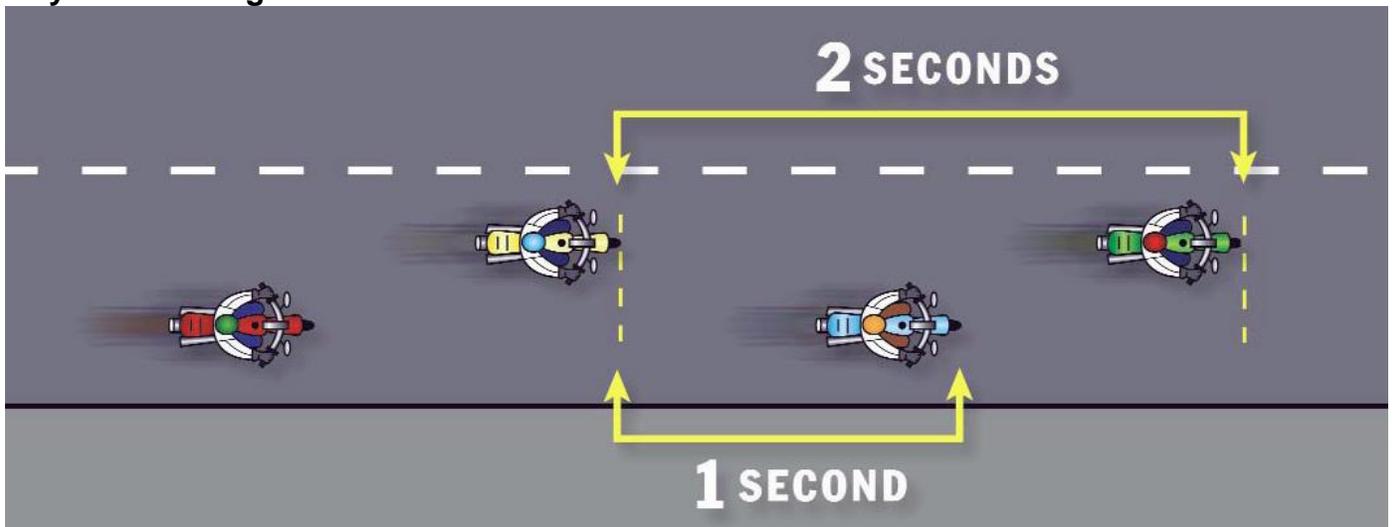
Road Captains

Road Captains are there for the safety of the ride and the education of the riders. Club rides will always be led by a Road Captain (RC) or Road Captain-in training. The RC will always give the group a safety briefing about the ride, even for short distances to a familiar place. The RCs can be identified by an orange bandana he or she is wearing. The lead RC will usually occupy the left or lead position. Other RC's will be in the rear of the group. The rear RC is called the Sweep RC. A Road Captain may approach you during a rest or fuel stop or at the destination and talk with you about something they observed.

Please accept their remarks in the manner in which they will be given- education and safety.

The Staggered Formation

Our chapter will normally ride in a staggered formation. This means that there will be 2-3 seconds between you and the motorcycle immediately to your front and approximately 1 second between you and the motorcycle diagonally to your left or right.



Once the staggered formation has been established HOLD YOUR POSITION. The riders around you expect you to be in the correct position. Being out of position will cause problems. Too small of a gap reduces the safety factor/reaction time. Too large a gap invites other vehicles to fill the space and disrupt the entire formation.

The staggered formation may get out of sync because a rider has left the formation. A gap is created. The gap is filled by the entire column moving forward. If the gap is in front of you simply move forward and fill it. Everyone behind you should then move forward. Do not start changing columns. This flip-flop movement is not a safe move in a group ride.

If you join a group ride after it has left the start point, fall in at the very back of the group. The Sweep Road Captain will then place you in the appropriate column.

There are a few exceptions to when the group will use the staggered formation. On very narrow roads the lead Road Captain may choose to ride in a single file. He or she will give the hand signal to change to a single file (see

hand signal handout). Your job is to pass the signal back and get into a single file. Spacing then becomes greater between bikes.

The other exception may be when the group encounters a large number of bicyclists on narrow roads or vehicles stopped on the shoulder. The lead Road Captain will put the group in single file. Then we pass the bicyclists/vehicle quickly, maintaining our speed until the entire group is around. The lead RC may put the group in a single file just prior to entering a parking lot.

Hand and Arm Signals

Hand signal and light signals are used to communicate when we ride. These signals are the only way the lead Road Captain can quickly communicate his or her instructions to the rest of the group. Your responsibilities are: learn the hand and arm signals used during group rides; pass along signals only with your left hand; quickly relay the signals from the bike in front of you to the bike to your rear; acknowledge receiving the signal with a flick of your lights or a head nod. *Do not initiate a hand signal or light signal on your own, or before it is passed down to you.*

Headlights

Ride with your headlight on low beam. This helps the lead Road Captain keep track of all the motorcycles in heavy traffic, at traffic lights, stop signs, and on turns. If your motorcycle has running lights, keep them turned off. The exception is the last motorcycle (Sweep) in the group.

Speeds

We will usually travel at the speed limit, +/- 5 miles per hour. Your motorcycle must be capable of these speeds and be able to accelerate to maintain the group formation. NOTE: Road conditions, weather, and traffic are factors that will influence the group's actual travel speed.

Traffic Lights and Intersections

We do not block intersections at stop signs or traffic lights. When stopped at an intersection you should pull up side-by-side. If it is a stop sign you should go through in pairs. You need to be alert at traffic lights. If the light is green hustle through it so the bikes behind you can make it. Do not panic if the group is split at a light. Come to a complete stop and pair up with another bike. When the light turns green, start out a moderate speed and regain your intervals. The lead Road Captain will slow down or stop at a safe place along the road until the rear group is reunited and the formation reestablished

Riding in Traffic

A group ride will create quite a train. On group rides we will encounter traffic. Sometimes others vehicles will need to exit or enter a roadway. If you are next to the vehicle that is signaling for a lane change, back off on your throttle and

let them pass through. Once the vehicle is gone, close the gap and continue to ride. We want to control this type of situation. We do not want a vehicle plowing through and causing a serious problem, possibly an accident.

The group will normally enter and exit controlled access highways in the staggered formation. The lead Road Captain may feel that a single file is more appropriate because of road or traffic condition. If so, the RC will give the correct hand signal.

Passing

The group may find itself behind a slower moving vehicle. On 4-6 lane highways (2-3 lanes each way) take your cue from the lead Road Captain. He or she will initiate the move with a signal to change lanes. When it appears to the lead Road Captain that the signal has been passed back, he or she will initiate the lane change and will then pass the vehicle. When the lead RC is at least 3 car lengths ahead of the passed vehicle, he will move back into the right lane and keep a constant speed faster than the vehicle being passed. This will create a space for the rest of bikes to pass and get back into the group in one lane. The rest of the bike will pass the vehicle in sequence, front to rear. Each biker must do a head check before pulling back into the lane with the passed vehicle.

On 2 lane roads (one lane each way) you will also take you cue from the lead RC. The vehicle will be passed one bike at a time. The bikes will move into a single file on the left side of the lane. Check your rear before pulling out to pass. Pull out, accelerate, and pass the vehicle. Do not pull over in front of the passed vehicle until you are at least three car lengths ahead of it. Keep up your passing speed after you have passed to allow room for the rest of the bikes to safely pass the vehicle.

Lane Changes

Several of the rules used for passing also apply to changing lanes. Maintain your speed and correct intervals. Do a head check before changing lanes. Take your cues from the lead RC. He or she will initiate the move with a signal to change lanes. When it appears to the lead Road Captain that the signal has been passed back to the sweep RC, he or she will initiate the lane change. The sweep RC, if possible, will move into new lane immediately, blocking vehicles from interfering with the lane change. The remaining bikes will change lanes sequentially, front to rear. In heavy traffic on multilane highways, other vehicles may end up the same lane into which the group is trying to move. The group behind the vehicles should maintain a speed and pass the vehicle as described in the paragraph above.

Split Groups

Split groups will happen because of traffic lights, stop signs, yield signs, and other types of vehicles getting into our group. The lead RC will be watching in his rear view mirror. The RC will either slow down or pull off the road at a safe location and wait for the remainder of the group to catch up. On occasion the group will become split on rides with numerous turns and route changes. It will happen. You have an important responsibility if you are the last bike in the front part of a split group. You should wait at the last turn until you and the lead bike in the following part of the group can see each other. At that time you should proceed back to the lead group. If this type of split is a possibility on the route the lead RC will discuss this at the pre-ride briefing.

Early Departure from the Group

If you start a ride with the group, we would like you to finish it. Tell all the Road Captain while in the staging area if you know you will not complete the ride with the group. You will probably be placed in the rear of the group. Riders who drop out of the pack and go their own way without letting the group know in advance may end up with a herd following them to an unknown destination.

Bad Road Conditions

At times the group will find itself on very narrow roads, roads with no shoulder, and roads under construction. The lead RC will slow the speed, increase the interval, and move into a single file. Once off of the bad roads, the lead RC will reestablish the normal staggered formation.

Breakdowns

If your bike breaks down, pull it off onto the shoulder and well clear of other traffic. A Road Captain will stop and render assistance while the rest of the group continues to the group destination. The RC will stay with you until your bike is running, you have called a wrecker, or you tell the RC you no longer need their help. You do not need to stop if you see a breakdown. The group will continue on towards its destination.

Accidents

All the THCC Road Captains have received CPR and First Aid Training as well as guidelines on managing an accident scene. As a rule, the Sweep RC will take charge of the scene and direct the other RCs and Chapter members to help with certain tasks i.e. traffic control, moving a downed motorcycle, assist in moving an injured person.

The Yo-Yo Effect

The yo-yo/ or accordion effect usually gets started when the lead bikes accelerate too fast for the group at stop lights, stop signs, yield signs, coming out of curves and tight turns. Subsequently the following riders are left with a large gap in front of them. The gap can get bigger the further back you go in the group. The speed at which the biker must ride to close the gap increases the further back in the group you are located.

The problem can be prevented by following a few simple rules. First, the lead bikers must restrain that impulse to crank it up when coming out of a curve or slow, tight turn. Second, accelerate at a moderate speed at traffic lights and stop and yield signs.

Alcohol

THCC and HOG have a “no alcohol” policy during chapter rides. Any member who consumes alcohol during a ride will be asked to leave the group and meet us at the ride destination. This rule doesn’t apply once the Lead RC for the ride announces that ride is officially over.

Summary

Group riding is one the best motorcycling experiences you can have. The camaraderie you will experience is unique to motorcycling. The chapter riding guidelines will help make the rides both safe and enjoyable. As you can see, you do not have to be a rocket scientist to understand the rules for safe group riding. Remember, riding in a group is safer than riding alone but common sense and road courtesy must prevail. If you have questions about these guidelines, talk to a club officer or a Road Captain. If you feel that another rider is doing something unsafe but do not want to talk to that person, talk to a Road Captain about your concern.

We do not have a HOG Penal Code to deal with unsafe riders. Riders who consistently violate our group riding rules, do not practice common sense safety and courtesy, and are viewed as irresponsible will meet with by the Chapter Director and Safety Officer. If it ever gets to this point with a member, you can bet he or she is not someone you want to ride next to.

8/31/2011

Stop - arm extended straight down, palm facing back



Slow Down - arm extended straight out, palm facing down



Speed Up - arm extended straight out, palm facing up



You Lead/Come - arm extended upward 45 degrees, palm forward pointing with index finger, swing in arc from back to front



Follow Me - arm extended straight up from shoulder, palm forward



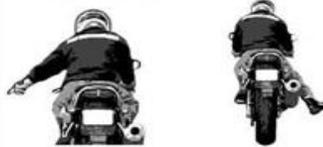
Single File - arm and index finger extended straight up



Double File - arm with index and middle finger extended straight up



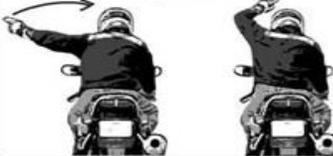
Hazard in Roadway - on the right, point with right foot; on the left, point with left hand



Highbeam - tap on top of helmet with open palm down



Pull Off - arm positioned as for right turn, forearm swung toward shoulder



Turn Signal On - open and close hand with fingers and thumb extended



Fuel - arm out to side pointing to tank with finger extended



Refreshment Stop - fingers closed, thumb to mouth



Comfort Stop - forearm extended, fist clenched with short up and down motion

