

# **Santa Maria**

## **Harley Owners Group**



## **Basic Group Riding & Safety Handbook**

Version 13.0

Dated:  
December 16, 2023

## References

State-by-State Helmet Laws <https://www.edgarsnyder.com/motorcycle-accidents/state-helmet-laws/>

California Motorcycle Handbook

<https://www.dmv.ca.gov/portal/file/motorcycle-driver-handbook-pdf/>

Group Riding – Tips, Hand Signals, Staggered Intervals [www.msf-usa.org/downloads/group Ride.pdf](http://www.msf-usa.org/downloads/group Ride.pdf)

Motorcycle Safety Foundation Guide to Group Riding Video

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=erpkyD7SMfw>

Motorcycle Riding Tips <https://www.msf-usa.org/library.aspx>

Motorcycle Safety Foundation <http://online2.msf-usa.org/msf/Default.aspx>

Emergency Medical Card <http://a-fib.com/print-a-free-medical-alert-i-d-wallet-card/>

## 1. From the Director

Thank you for joining the activities of the Santa Maria Chapter of the Harley Owners Group® (HOG). Our Road Captains and other Chapter Officers have compiled the following information into a "Basic Group Riding Handbook." All members should familiarize themselves with the information in this handbook so we can enjoy the adventures of the road together safely and without incident. This handbook is intended to be a guide and nothing more. We cannot prepare you for every possible situation any more than we can provide you a list of specific events that will affect your life tomorrow. Every on-the-road encounter, incident, situation or emergency is different and remains the individual rider's responsibility to respond appropriately. Riders must be AWARE, must be ALERT, and must always be VIGILANT. A safe and enjoyable ride is our primary concern. Since we are working to improve our riding skills, I would be pleased to hear any recommendations for changes to this handbook. Don't be bashful; we can't do this without your involvement. That said it's time to ride. The adventures of the road are awaiting us.

Sincerely,

Santa Maria HOG Director

## 2. Disclaimer

Every effort has been made to ensure the information contained within this handbook is current and accurate; however, the Santa Maria HOG® Chapter, the Santa Maria Harley Davidson Dealer and the Harley Davidson Motor Company do not make any claims as to the accuracy of the information published. This handbook is written with references to H.O.G. guidelines as well as other Chapter inputs which are too numerous to credit. Annually, the incoming Executive Board will review this handout for any changes that might need to be made. Remember, you as the rider are ultimately responsible for your own safety!

## 3. Alcohol Policy

The consumption and use of alcohol are a serious personal responsibility involving the safety of family, riding friends and the individual HOG® member. Alcohol consumption before or during a motorcycling activity is not safe, responsible behavior. Santa Maria HOG does not allow the use of alcohol or illicit drugs before or during a riding event and does not furnish alcohol at Chapter events. The Ride Leader / Road Captain will designate the termination point of the ride at which point riders are free to make their own personal choice on the consumption of alcohol, but they will be asked **not** to ride back with other riders who have not made the choice of consuming alcohol. This is for the safety of those riders who chose not to consume alcohol. Riders whose skills are observed or suspected to be impaired by alcohol or illicit drugs before riding cannot join the ride. Riders using alcohol or illicit drugs while riding will be asked to leave the ride. This policy applies to Riders and their Passengers on Chapter rides. It is the responsibility of each Santa Maria HOG® Chapter member to support the consistent enforcement of this policy.

## 4. Safety

The Santa Maria HOG® Chapter has adopted the following basic policies for group rides:

- Ride Safe
- Be Courteous
- Use Common Sense
- Have Fun

The fundamental principle of safe group riding shall be reinforced through the sharing of educational material printed by National HOG®, the Motorcycle Safety Foundation, Riders Edge and other nationally recognized sources. Nevertheless, the ultimate responsibility for safety of the ride belongs to the individual member/rider. Safety and the use of common sense are paramount.

## 5. The Simple Stuff

- You should show up for rides at least 20 - 30 minutes before the scheduled departure time for the pre-ride briefing so you do not miss important information or keep other riders waiting.
- Have your gas tank full and your bladder empty.
- Check your bike thoroughly beforehand. Proper maintenance is a prerequisite for a day of safe riding.
- Check your oil level and tire pressures before you leave home.
- Have what you will need with you for the ride: water, proper clothing, etc.
- You are encouraged to have some sort of tow insurance in case of breakdown on the road. This will alleviate any lengthy delays for the rest of the group on the ride. You may want to check with your insurance agent for this service.
- It is strongly suggested that you wear a lanyard with your emergency / medical information, a Road ID bracelet with your emergency / medical information or some other form of documentation in case of emergency.
- It is suggested that you carry a First Aid kit with you as well. Kits today are very small and compact so that you can carry one on a motorcycle.
- If you are not up to making the ride, TAP OUT! There are plenty of other days to ride if you are not up to making the ride.
- Remember, you are ultimately responsible for your own safety!

There is nothing more uncomfortable than being a long way from home without the proper clothing and experience a major weather change.

Come prepared!!

The purpose of riding in an organized group instead of an undisciplined pack is to provide the additional safety that a well-organized group inherently generates. This comes from within the group and from the outside. When a group rides in an orderly fashion, people don't get in each other's way, and the organization of the formation itself discourages cars from attempting to cut in. In some cases, even trucks will move to the far side of their lane to minimize wind blast when they see a well-ordered formation "single up" and move as far away from the truck as their lane allows.

Additionally, your responsibilities prior to the group ride include being familiar with the limits of your own riding skills, as well as thoroughly knowing the capabilities of your own motorcycle. If you are a newer rider, your group ride leader or Lead Road Captain should suggest that you complete a formal rider training class prior to take part in the event. For longer trips, you need to be aware of your own stamina. It's also important to realize that your motorcycle may handle differently when loaded with a passenger or luggage.

Once riding rules have been adopted by a club, **EVERYONE** riding with the Chapter is expected to follow them. Anyone violating the rules, and compromising everyone else's safety, will be warned, and if their actions continue, will no longer be welcome to ride with the Chapter.

## 6. Key Group Riding Personnel

*The Road Captain is the Ultimate Authority for a Chapter Group Ride*

**Lead Road Captain:** Responsible for organizing the ride and selecting the route. Rides at the front of the group and oversees the ride.

**Assistant Road Captain:** Will ride in the middle of the group and assist the Lead Road Captain when needed. Lead the second group if more than 20 bikes are present for that day's ride.

**Sweep Road Captain:** Will be positioned at the back of the group. This position is known as "the Sweep" and will watch over the group and provide assistance to any rider that may require help.

## 7. Pre-Ride Brief

Prior to the scheduled departure time, the Road Captain leading the ride will give a pre-ride briefing to go over and review group riding communications (hand signals), safety topics, the ride route and as well as the location of fuel, meal, rest or lodging stops. Be patient and give your full attention. Group riding communications, safety topics and the ride route must be covered at the beginning for every group ride. This may not be your first group ride, but it could be the first group ride for someone riding in front of you. This pre-ride briefing is for safety. Ask questions and make certain you have all the information you need regarding the ride. This is also a good time to inform the Road Captains what they need to know about you and any riding limitations. The Lead Rider / Road Captain will designate the termination point of the ride. At this point riders are free to go their own way and at this point if desired may choose to consume alcohol (including passengers) but will be asked **not** to ride back with other riders who have not made the choice of consuming alcohol.

It is also a good idea to find out who knows CPR and/or First Aid. Those that do should be identified before the pre-ride briefing concludes.

## 8. Release Waiver Forms

All members participating in a chapter-sponsored ride must sign "The Ride Sheet" and complete the release forms for their non-member guests prior to that day's ride. A member may only sponsor one or two guest per ride and there are three types of waivers that must be filled out and signed by the member and the guest (whichever one might be applicable).

They are:

- **Chapter Event Release Form for Adults**

This release form must be signed by all adult participants in any chapter road or field event if the individual 1) is not a member of the local chapter hosting the event, 2) is a member of the host chapter but has not signed the Chapter Member Enrollment Form and Release for the year in which the event occurs.

- **Chapter Event Release Form for Minors**

This release form must be signed by a minor's parent or guardian whenever a minor participates in any chapter event other than a chapter meeting, even if the minor is a member of the chapter.

- **Minors Assumption of Risk Acknowledgement**

A minor, aged 12 or above, must sign this form when participating in any chapter event other than a chapter meeting. Minors Aged 12 or above will have this form AND the Chapter Event Release Form for Minors filled out and signed.

## 9. Rider Conduct

**Rider Conduct** is simple...be considerate. Do not be the last one to be ready when the group saddles up. Basic rules – show up with a full tank of gas, restroom visited before departure time, stomach full. If you have ideas about the ride, express it in the planning phase not the day of the ride. At any stop made by the group make sure you take care of personal business first such as clothing changes, mechanical adjustments, gas, or using the restroom before you engage in social conversation. You should be ready and able to move your motorcycle within the five (5) minutes of Road Captain's signal to mount up. That includes helmet on, gloves on, jacket on, bike running, loaded up and ready to go. Make that your goal. The group ride is not a place for any of the Road Captains or riders to push their personal performance envelope. During fueling it is important to fuel your bike and move out of the way so other bikes on the ride can fuel their bikes. This will expedite the process and not cause any unnecessary delays for the ride.

## 10. New Riders and Riders with Speed Restrictions

Rides will be conducted to the level of the rider with the greatest limitations. What this means is we will ride no faster than necessary to support newer inexperienced riders or we will ride within mechanical limitation like the 55 mph break in period of a new bike. New riders and new bikes should ride towards the back of the group. The reasons are:

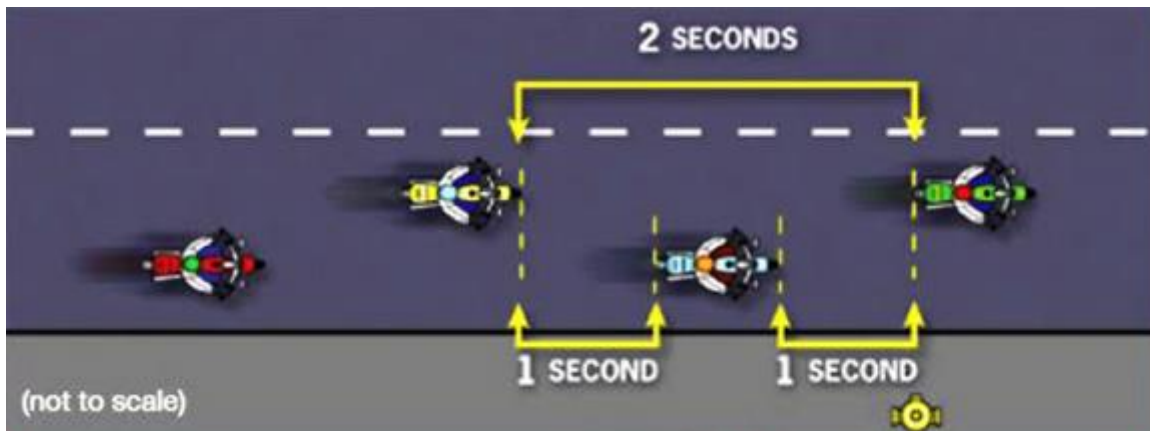
- By riding in the back, you are less likely to feel that you must keep up with the group
- You can ride at a pace that will keep you up with the group but also you will be able to get use to riding in a group formation.
- The Sweep Road Captain can be with you in the event you get separated from the group

- Ride pace is limited to match break-in speed for new motorcycles.

## 11. Formation Riding

When riding in a group, the importance of formation riding is critical to the safety of all riders within the group. It is important to know the various formations and the basic rules to follow to ensure a comfortable and safe ride. Remember you are riding in a group, so not only do you have to think of yourself, but you must be aware of the other riders around you. Try to maintain a consistent interval between you and the other riders. Inconsistent opening and closing the gap can cause the group to experience an accordion effect. Dynamic lane changes should not be made while riding in a group as this could cause an unsafe situation for other riders. Additionally, riders should not ride too close to the center line or hang over the center line as this can cause an unsafe condition. By doing so this may cause an unsafe condition for automobiles passing riders as well as creating an unsafe condition for other riders in the group. Riders should ride in the left or right third of the lane accordingly.

**Staggered:** The standard group riding formation will be the staggered formation. The Lead Road Captain will always lead the group from the left position of the lane. Riders will ride in a double file line within a single lane at a staggered interval. This interval generally consists of two seconds between you and the rider directly in front of you and one second between you and the rider immediately to your left or right. However, give yourself enough room to feel comfortable and provide enough room to stop in the event of an emergency. Try not to allow yourself too much space between you and the rider in front of you as this can cause the group to become drawn out or lengthened. The best way to determine proper distance is to be able to see the face of the rider in front of you to the immediate left or right clearly in their mirror.



**Single File:** The group will be put into single file by the Lead Road Captain because of narrow or curvy roads, obstacles or other potential hazards that the staggered formation will not allow for. Again, the general distance between you and the rider in front of you is two seconds. However, for extremely curvy roads you may want to expand this distance to fit your comfort level.

Remember: formation group riding is intended to promote safety by increasing our visibility to automobile drivers. It is not intended to be mandatory if a situation dictates otherwise. Staggered formation, single file adjustments, or emergency evasive action should take place safely and whenever warranted. This remains the rider's individual responsibility. Safety remains the prevailing factor for all rides. Formation adjustments may be warranted and necessary without the Lead

Road Captain executing and passing back a signal. For example, a narrow or winding section of the road may require a change from the staggered to single file formation. Be alert and be aware of those around you and, above all, **BE SAFE**.

**Trikes and Sidecars.** There are no established rules about where a trike rides within the group by HOG National however, if the group is riding staggered then the trike or sidecar should also ride staggered either left or right of the center of the lane. If for some reason this impairs the ability of the Lead Road Captain to see the whole group, then it could be decided that the trike and/or sidecar should move to the back of the group. This will enable the Lead Road Captain to have a better view in his/her mirrors of the majority if not all the group behind them. This will be left up to the discussion of the Lead Road Captain.

**Unsafe Rider:** is riding or behaving in an unsafe or unwelcome manner. The Lead Road Captain along with another Road Captain or if a second Road Captain is unavailable on the ride a Chapter officer should take the individual to the side and politely point out the problem. If the problem persists or the rider is uncooperative, the options are to ask the rider to leave the group or end the Chapter's ride at that point. The Chapter Director will be notified of the incident and report the incident to our sponsoring dealership.

**Buddy System:** When riding in a staggered formation the rider diagonally to your rear (one second behind you) is your "buddy". When riding in single file the rider to your rear is your "buddy". If during the ride you need to exit the formation, get the attention of the riders behind you, signal with both turn signal and arm motion then pull off the roadway. Make **absolutely** sure there is safe clearance to do so. If by taking your hand off the handlebars might cause you to lose control of the motorcycle do not release the bars. If your buddy, in front of you, signals his/her intent to exit please make the riders behind you aware of the situation. When you exit, your buddy and the sweep should be the only riders to pull off and stop with you. **All** other riders should continue in formation until the next stop.

**Separation from the Group:** As a rider in the formation, when changing direction, whether it be an intersection, parking lot or other circumstance, if that rider has lost visual contact with the rider behind them, please do the following:

- As you are coming up to the direction change point, check your mirror, if indeed the rider or riders behind you are not visible, at some point stop and wait for them. You can stop before making the turn or immediately after completing the turn, anywhere that is safe and visible to the upcoming riders. Once you have made visual contact with them and they have seen you, proceed.

While in formation if a rider that's "riding their ride" is continually losing contact with the riders ahead of them and causing the group to be separated please do the following:

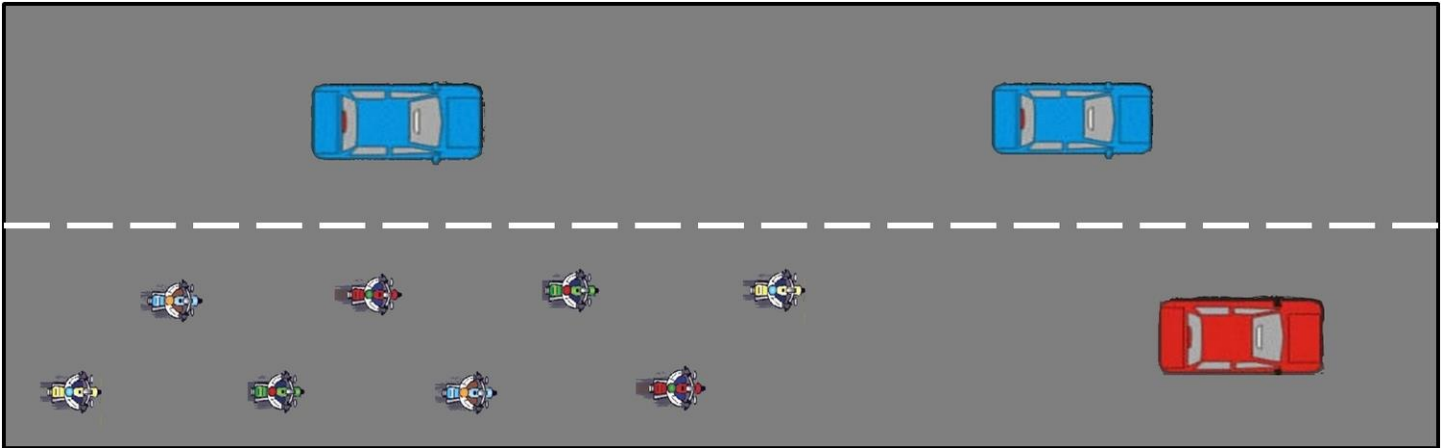
- This situation would typically happen while in single file. When it is safe to do so the rider should move to the right side of the road and wave the riders behind them to move around them. As the group passes the rider that rider may find a slot to fill that he/she can ride in and not obstruct other riders. That position may be just ahead of the sweep. Then at the next stop let the Road Captain leading the ride know that you are uncomfortable with the pace of the ride so he/she can make the necessary adjustments. It should never be the intention of any Road Captain or other rider to put anyone at risk.

## 12. Standard Maneuvers

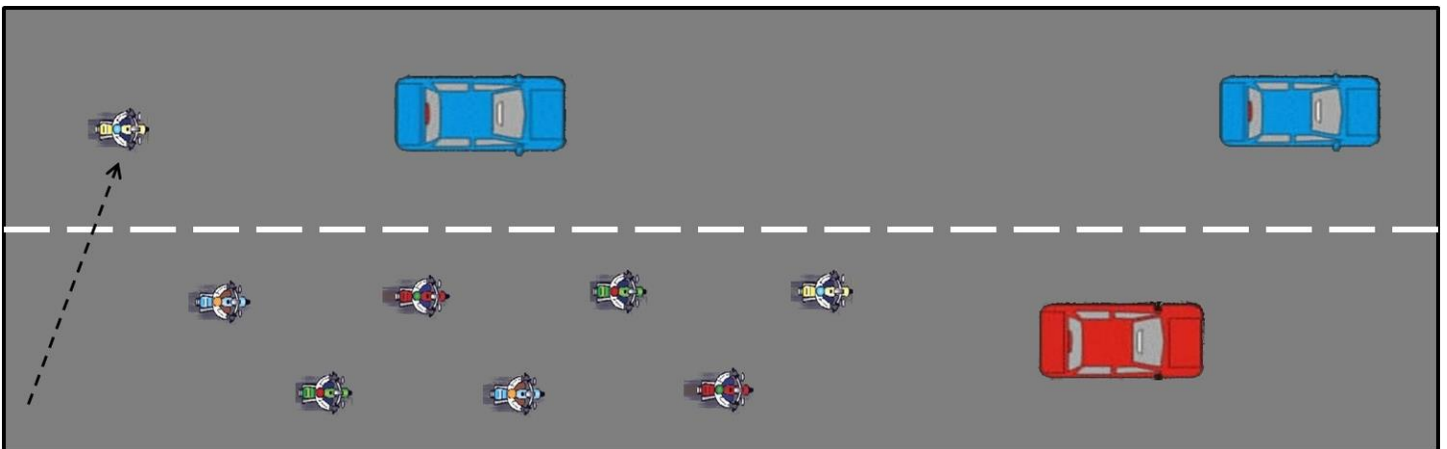


**Changing Lanes:** A lane change refers to maneuvering the group into a new travel lane where the direction of traffic in the new lane is the same direction of travel as the group. When traveling on divided highways it may become necessary to change lanes to avoid hazards or to pass slow moving traffic. Lane changes will **ALWAYS** be initiated by the Lead Road Captain. Ideally, our approach to lane changes is to have the Sweep Road Captain capture the new lane and allow the traffic clear between the Sweep Road Captain and the Lead Road Captain before moving the Group to the new lane. Members of the group should follow the Lead Road Captain. We always change lanes from front to back after the Sweep Road Captain has captured the required lane. The five figures below illustrate our approach to changing lanes.

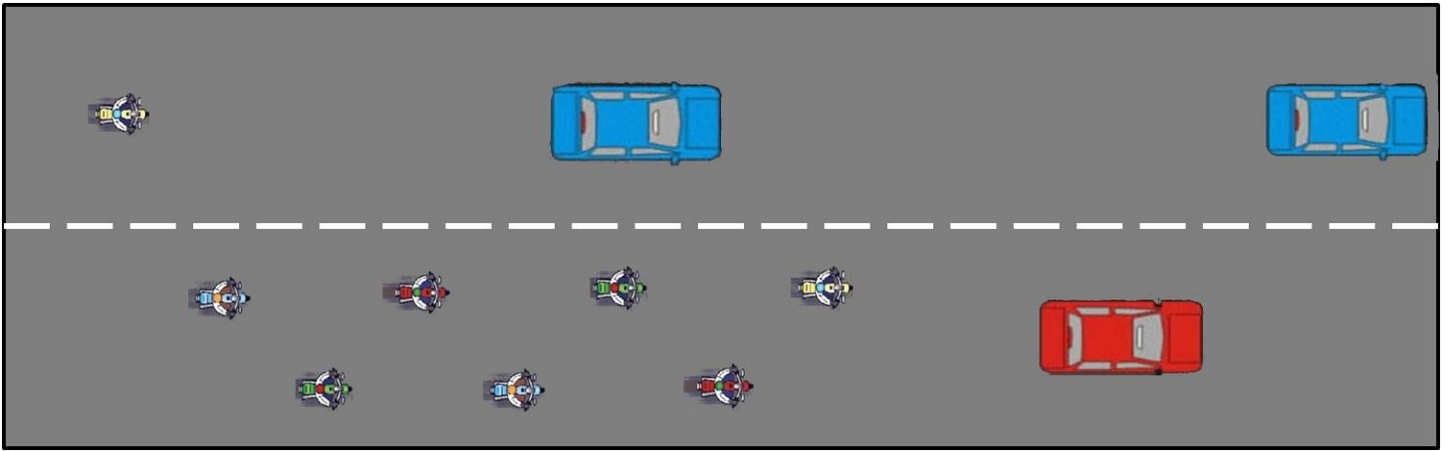
Group approaches a slow-moving vehicle:



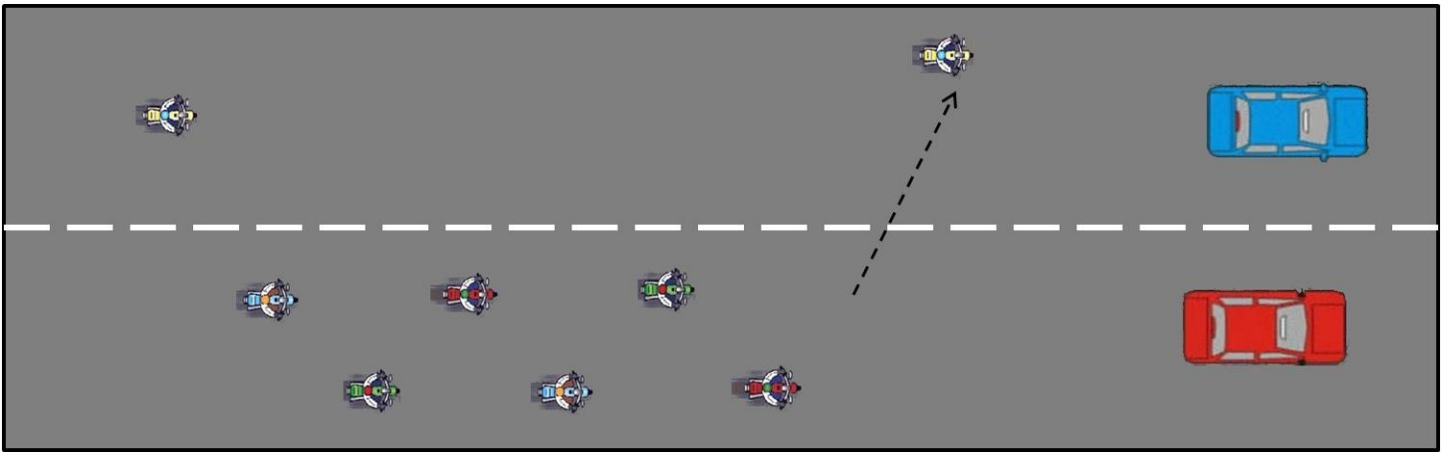
Sweep Road Captain moves to capture the left lane:



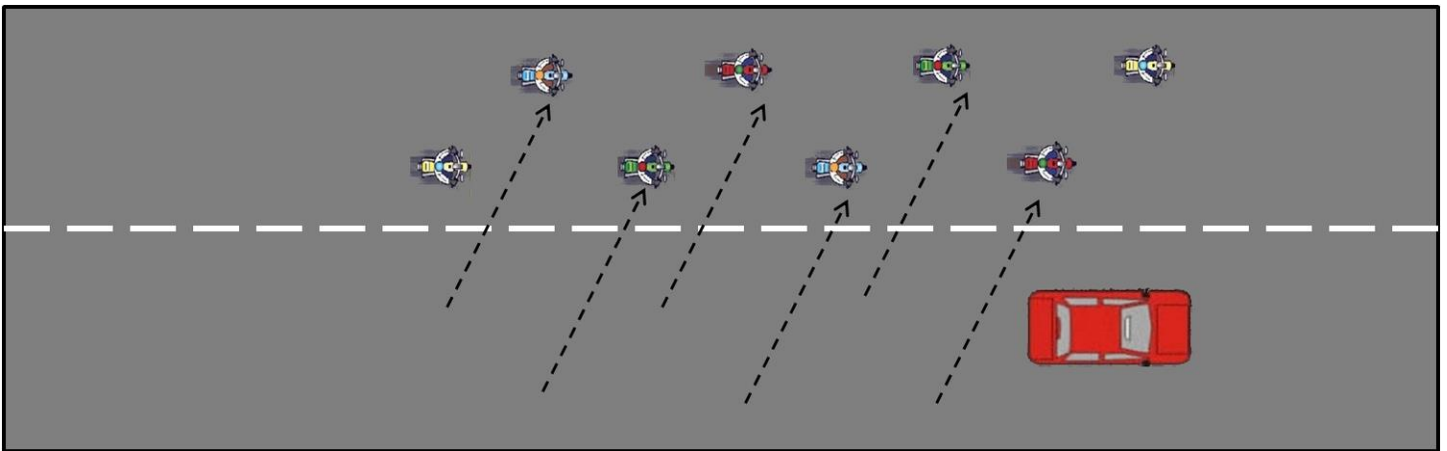
Lead Road Captain waits for traffic between Lead and Sweep to pass:



Lead Road Captain moves to the left lane:



Group follows Lead Road Captain to the left lane:



When traveling on a two-lane road and a vehicle attempts to pass the group but needs to get back into the lane that the group is traveling all efforts should be made to allow the vehicle back into the lane even if this means getting in with the group of motorcycles. Failure to do so may lead to a head-on collision that could put the group in danger.

**NOTE:** Except for the Sweep Road Captain, no one is to change lanes until the Lead Road Captain does so. If the lane change is required for safety reasons like a road hazard in the lane of travel or because the ride route requires exiting a freeway with little time to perform the above-described lane change, the Lead Road Captain may initiate the lane change without waiting for the Sweep to perform the lane change and when it is safe.

**Stop Signs and Stop Lights:** It is normal for bikes coming to a stop signal to pull up next to each other two by two, breaking the staggered formation and to take off together two by two and re-establish the staggered formation.

**Filling the Gap:** If a rider drops out of a staggered formation and the group is not going to stop (e.g., a rider decides to ride with the Sweep,) it is desirable to preserve the integrity of the formation by filling the gap. However, you should not fill the gap until the rider in front of you acknowledges your presence by waving you to move forward. Gradually each rider behind the gap, waiting for a signal from the rider ahead to move forward, will fill the gap safely. If the rider in front of you does not wave you forward maintain your position and do not fill the gap. The gap will eventually get filled either by stopping at a stop sign or light or when the group stops for a break.

**Passing:** Pass quickly, but safely. If possible, The Lead Road Captain will complete the pass far enough beyond the vehicle being passed to provide enough room for the entire group to pass. Otherwise, riders will pass on an independent basis. Remember, there are riders behind you. When your group wants to pass slower traffic (or change lanes) on a freeway or interstate, the group may pass as a unit. When it is safe and legal, the lead rider should signal the lane change when they have determined the entire group can change lanes and pass a unit. The other riders then follow this lead and signal one at a time to move into the next lane. Always check your mirror and check to see where traffic is when passing.

**Pulling off the Road:** When getting off the road due to a mechanical problem or an accident it is important to get as far off the road as possible and bikes should be parked in a single file and not in a staggered formation.

**Separated from the Group:** You might get separated from the group because of a signal, traffic or other reason. Don't panic. Your group should have a pre-planned procedure or place selected in which to re-group. Don't feel pressured to catch up, especially if it means breaking the law or riding beyond your limits. Proceed to the regrouping area or call the preselected contact person for your group.

Once a rider has left the formation each following rider should close the gap in the formation. Do this only when it is safe and the rider diagonally in front of you knows you are closing the gap. The rider in front should wave you forward to acknowledge you. If you cannot safely close the gap wait until the next signal, stop sign or scheduled stop, at that time the problem should resolve itself.

## 13. High Alert Areas

**Intersections:** Intersections are one of the more dangerous areas as traffic may come from many different directions including from behind. Remember red lights provide no physical barrier to traffic so be aware – be alert.

When making a left turn at a protected intersection, where traffic turning left has its own turn signal arrow, tighten the formation to allow as many riders as possible to pass quickly through the intersection. Do not ride side-by-side; the group should make the turn single file or in a tight, staggered formation. Use the same procedure for right turns and remember to respect the rights of other roadway users. During your riders' briefing, you should have discussed what to do if all your group cannot proceed through the light before it turns red. Knowing that the group will stop at a designated point up ahead will help keep each rider from feeling pressured to jeopardize safety by running the light.

In unprotected intersections that have no turn signal arrow, riders should proceed with caution and in single file. Each rider should act as an individual, only making the turn when it is safe and legal. While awaiting your turn, remember to check your rearview mirrors, as other motorists may be expecting you to ride on as a group. The most important thing is to make the turn safely. The group can re-form after everyone has ridden safely through the intersection.

At yield intersections be safe and cautious. Turn your head to check for traffic before merging. Respect the law, other members of the group and other roadway users. Put safety and operating within the law ahead of trying to stay in formation. The group can reestablish its formation later.

One final comment on intersections...**blocking an intersection is illegal in the state of California.**

**Freeway Merging:** The Lead Road Captain will try to facilitate the merger as a group but merging as a group may not always be possible. It is preferable to have the group enter the road in a single file fashion however; the Lead Road Captain may change this depending upon the number of bikes and other conditions. Once the Lead Road captain merges onto the freeway he/she will keep the group at a slower speed of travel to allow the riders at the back to catch up to the group. You should merge safely and if while merging, a vehicle gets between you and the group **do not** attempt to pass around the vehicle. This is unsafe and the riders behind you will do the same. Maintain your position behind the vehicle until the vehicle moves out of your lane allowing you to reconnect to the group. Remember, no automobile driver likes to be in the middle of a motorcycle group and will move out of the way as soon as possible.

Ideally exiting an interstate should be done in a single-file formation, which allows a better space cushion, time to react at the end of the exit lane or when merging onto another roadway. The Lead Road Captain may change this depending upon the number of bikes and other conditions. For example, if there is a large number of bikes, traveling single file may spread out the group too far that could cause issues for those at the end to miss a traffic signal cycle or to exit safely by creating a long queuing line.

**Turns:** The Ride Leader will signal turns using standard hand signals and simultaneous turn signals. Duplicate the signals and pass them back.

**Parking:** Group rides will usually stay away from the curb lane if there are parked cars. The reason is to avoid suddenly opened car doors, and people and/or animals darting out from between parked

cars. If parking is organized, you get your group off their bikes more quickly. You also run less risk of blocking access to others trying to park in the lot. Avoid parking downhill or head-in, or you may find you need to use your fellow riders as a reverse gear! Try to park where you can pull through to make both the arrival and departure much smoother. If this isn't possible, try to position the motorcycles so that the group can depart as a unit in single file.

**Passing Large Trucks:** The key here is “**BE SEEN.**” Assume you are not easily seen, and you will probably be correct in that assumption. Everyone should move to the opposite side of the lane furthest away from the truck, providing a larger space cushion between you and the truck. It is a general rule that if you cannot see the truck driver's face in his/her rear-view mirror, he/she cannot see you either.

## **14. Road Hazards / Roadside Emergencies**

If you see a hazard such as a pothole, rock, tire tread, or gravel, identify it so that the rider behind you sees the hazard as well. Point out the hazard with your foot. We prefer to use our feet to identify road hazards instead of our hand, so we always keep our hands on the controls.

If a member of your group has mechanical difficulties or has been involved in a crash, the rider with the problem, their buddy and the Sweep Road Captain will stop. All other riders in the group should continue to the next scheduled stop area since doubling back could cause additional safety problems.

The sweep rider should assess the situation and, if it appears there will be a delay, send one rider ahead to meet the rest of the group at the next scheduled stop area. If medical assistance is necessary, the sweep rider can use a cell phone to call 911.

## **15. Traffic**

Automobiles will sometimes merge into the group. The automobile drivers normally do not like it and will not stay there and usually move out of the group as soon as possible. Let them in and let them out.

## **16. You are the Leader (of a split group)**

Traffic lights and other traffic conditions will often break up the group. You may even find that you end up the leader of group that has split from the original group. Don't panic and carry on just as you have been. The Lead Road Captain will realize the group has become split and will slow down or pull over so you and your group can rejoin. If necessary and when safe to do so, a Road Captain in your split group pulls up and takes over. In any case, split groups should continue to the next destination or planned stop.

## **17. Need More Space**

A rider may need more space because of their experience level, road conditions, or bike's handling characteristics. The rider should signal this by extending the left arm down and slightly to the side with palm facing downward then signal with an up and downward waving motion to indicate 'slow down'. Riders behind should then drop back and give the rider showing the signal more room. An inexperienced rider may also choose to move to the back of the group, and this should be done prior

to leaving the departure point of the ride or can be done at the next stop during a ride. In either case the rider should notify the Lead Road Captain and the Sweep Road Captain of this change.

## **18. Need to Drop Back or Stop**

A rider may need to drop out of their position in the group and take up a position in front of the Sweep so they can adjust for any special situation such as, needing more space or slower speed, or the rider may need to stop. Whatever the need, the procedure must be done safely. There are three methods for moving out of the group:

- If on a multi-lane road, the rider signals to change lanes, does so, then waves the other riders to pass.
- The rider keeps to their side of the lane and waves the other riders to pass.
- If a rider has a serious need to drop back or stop, the rider signals the riders behind for more space and pulls off the road when it can be done safely and immediately waves other riders to pass.

The Sweep will stay with the last rider to either ride with them or help if necessary.

## **19. Other Non-Group Bikes Overtaking Our Group**

Sometimes other bikes will overtake our group from the rear. This is a concern on two-lane twisty roads. The group will likely already be in single file so move as far to the right as possible and allow the faster rider to pass safely and with as much safety consideration as necessary for the both of you.

## **20. Hand Signals**

Hand signals are our primary means of communication and will always be used to maneuver the group, change formation, or point out hazards. Hand signals should be given in a timely manner. Not so early that they are meaningless, and not so late that they become unnecessary. The Lead Road Captain will initiate all hand signals apart from pointing out hazards. Any rider in the group, in any position, upon becoming aware of a hazard, should point out the hazard to all riders that follow. When the Lead Road Captain issues a hand signal, he or she shall hold the hand signal until the rider behind the Lead Road Captain performs the signal. Upon seeing the signal relayed back, the Lead Road Captain may then resume riding with two hands. Each subsequent rider will maintain the hand signal until the rider behind acknowledges receipt by also performing the hand signal. The Sweep Road Captain will perform the hand signal to acknowledge receipt to the rider in front of the Sweep. Passengers may assist with the passing back of hand signals.

The hand signals are:



**Single File** – Hand raised high above the head with the index finger pointed upward.



**Staggered** – Hand raised high above the head with the two finger victory sign given and rotating the wrist.



**Right Turn** – Left arm out to the side bent at the elbow and hand or fist pointed upward.



**Left Turn** – Left arm straight out to the side with open hand or pointing to the left



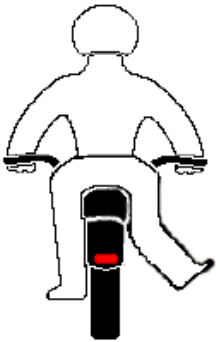
**Slow Down** – Left arm outstretched and downward with hand flat, palm facing down moving in a downward motion



**Start Your Engines** – Left arm raised up high above your head with index finger pointed upward and moving in a circular motion.



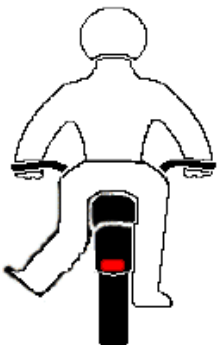
**Speed Up** – Left arm outstretched and downward with hand flat, palm facing up moving in an upward motion.



**Road Hazard Right** – Extend your right leg toward the road hazard pointing with your foot.



**Hazard on the Right** – Motion Left hand above your head and move back and forth to indicate a hazard is on the right such as a bicyclist or a motor vehicle is on the right side.

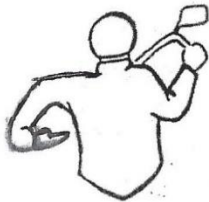


**Road Hazard Left** - Extend your left leg toward the road hazard pointing with your foot.





**Group Broken** - Hand raised high above the head formed in a fist and the signaling arm is straight. Maintain this position until the rider in front of you gives the signal. This signal needs to reach the Road Captain leading the group so he knows to either slow down or to safely pull the group over. You may honk your horn to get the riders attention in front of you to assist in getting this signal passed to the front. Anytime you pass through an intersection you should look in your rear view mirror to see if anyone behind you gets stopped at the intersection. If every rider in the group gets in the habit of checking their mirrors after an intersection they will see the Group Broken signal and pass it forward to the leader.



**Need Fuel** – Point to your gas tank



**Tap Out** – If you need to leave the group for any reason then tap on your helmet up and down, motion over your head and point to the right, and if everything is good then give the thumbs up as well. if you are having a problem then do not indicate the thumbs up and your buddy and the Sweep Road Captain will pull off with you.



Common exceptions to these guidelines occur with a rider who is not yet experienced with group riding. If a maneuver looks too dangerous or awkward for the new rider to complete safely, he or she should do what he/she needs to do to protect themselves and avoid an accident. This may mean passing up a turn or taking it very slowly, or parking somewhere not with the group, or going more slowly through a curve than the riders ahead of him/her.

Each rider commands his/her entire area within a lane and may move to left or right in it as required.

Another exception: The Sweep may not travel in the same path as the rest of the group. If, for example, a two-lane road is narrowing so that a lane is about to be lost, the Sweep will frequently “close the door” by moving out of the group’s staggered formation into the lane which is soon to disappear. This is to prevent a vehicle or motor vehicle from trying at the last minute to pass part of the group and then have to cut into it when the pavement runs out. Even if the riders near the back of the group observe that the Sweep is no longer in the position where he/she has been riding most of the time, they should maintain their own place in the group.

## **21. Forming Up to Depart**

This is an unceremonious activity. When the Lead Road Captain says it is time to form up and leave, everyone should line up behind him or her in a two-by-two formation. If you feel more comfortable up front behind the Lead Road Captain don’t feel bashful about telling someone you need to position yourself in front of them or move to the back of the group. If you would rather ask a Road Captain to request the position in the group for you, you may do that as well.

## **22. Parking**

Plan ahead when parking and always try, if circumstances allow, backing into a parking spot so your rear tire is to the curb. Try to park so any pushing that may need to be done when leaving will be done downhill.

## **23. Ride Your Own Ride**

The often-heard rule, “Ride Your Own Ride,” means that any guideline for group riding can be disregarded when it doesn’t make sense and is clearly an issue with safety. “Ride your own ride” is really the term used to emphasize that you must take responsibility for your riding. Never ride above your personal comfort level. Advise the Lead Road Captain during or before the pre-ride briefing of any issues or concerns that you may have. If, during the ride, you feel pressured or uncomfortable, pull out of the group when safe to do so and take up a position in front of the Sweep. The Sweep will ride at your comfort level and appreciate your good judgment in taking a positive safe action. If the two of you lose the group, another Road Captain or competent person will assume the Sweep duties of the first group. Although you are part of a group, you are also an individual and the sole operator of your bike. “Ride your own ride” is the term used to emphasize that you must take responsibility for your riding.

For the ride, the Lead Bike will choose a lane, determine the speed at which the riders are to travel, and determine the formation (single file or staggered) which makes the most sense for safety, maneuvers and navigation for the entire group. The group will adhere to these protocols set by the Lead Road Captain throughout the ride.

However, determining whether this is the case for each individual rider is their own responsibility and they must act prudently at all times. Common exceptions to these guidelines occur with a rider who is not yet experienced with group riding. If a maneuver looks too dangerous or awkward for the new rider to complete safely, he or she should do what he/she needs to do to protect themselves and

avoid an accident. This may mean passing up a turn or taking it very slowly, or parking somewhere not with the group, or going more slowly through a curve than the riders ahead of him/her.

Other exceptions to the guidelines include the following:

- The Sweep may not travel in the same path as the rest of the group.
- A two-lane road is narrowing so that a lane is about to be lost, the Sweep will frequently “close the door” by moving out of the group’s staggered formation into the lane which is soon to disappear. This is to prevent a four-wheeler from trying at the last minute to pass part of the group and then have to cut into it when the pavement runs out.
- Even if the riders near the back of the group observe that the Sweep is no longer in the position where he/she has been riding most of the time, they should maintain their own place in the group.

## **24. Health and Well Being**

Please take a moment before any ride to perform a self-evaluation. Perform a mental check of these key areas:

- Are you well?
- Have you had enough sleep?
- Have you taken something that would impair your judgment or reflexes, making it unwise and unsafe to ride?
- Do you have proper riding attire?
- You should tell a Road Captain your limitations and concerns, don’t be shy.
- TAP OUT of the ride if you are not up to riding that day

The above key areas are important to ensure the safety of yourself and others in the group. We cannot stress enough the importance of proper riding attire. At the minimum, you should wear jeans, a long-sleeved shirt and boots. If you chose to wear sneakers or shorts, be prepared to have a Road Captain, tell you that you can’t go on the ride. Your safety is the Road Captains primary concern, and it should be yours as well.

## 25. Pre-Ride Check List

Riders need to take some simple actions prior to the ride to ensure their motorcycle is ready for the road. Check your motorcycle's general condition, critical components and fluid levels prior to every ride to help ensure a safe ride. A common checklist used to help you remember the exact items you need to check is TCLOCK. The acronym TCLOCK stands for:

- T** - Tires & Wheels
- C** - Cables & Controls
- L** - Lights,
- O** - Oil & Fluids
- C** - Chain & Chassis
- K** - Kickstand (Side stand)

Remember our Santa Maria H.O.G.® Chapter policy is:

**Ride your own ride**

**Be Safe**

**Be Alert**

**Be Aware**

**Be Courteous**

**Use Common Sense**

**HAVE FUN!**