



## ROAD CAPTAINS GUIDE

Road Captains will report to the President of the club.

Road Captain is the name for the rider who co-ordinates a multiple-bike ride. Road Captain can refer to both the leader and the marshals who, among their other duties, check that other riders are safe. Working as part of a team, the Road Captain is responsible for the safety of the riders and the smooth running of the ride itself. Duties include planning, thinking ahead, communication and rider education, e.g. no passing on the left side of a biker.

### 1. **Planning the ride**

A Road Captain is a fundamental part of any ride planning. Especially where riders may number in the dozens or even hundreds, he has to be well versed in the route. He must know about potential hazards, road conditions and any special events that are happening at the time of the ride. A Road Captain will ride the route a few days in advance to make sure that nothing has changed, will keep an eye on the weather, and will also be present at ride planning meetings.

### 2. **Educating and informing riders**

The Road Captain is expected to brief the group before the ride. He will inform riders about the pace of the ride, tell them about staggered formation, and will explain what the rules are. Some rides require the participants to ride together in tight formation like mass rides, funerals etc., while others have a more loose, "at your own pace" style, like breakfast runs and touring.(open road). The Road Captain will also answer questions and educate new riders on hand signals and other riding etiquette in such a manner that it is not offensive. Finally, the Road Captain will let riders know what to do should they break down or have a mishap, and might have a tactful word in the ear of a rider whose behaviour is causing problems. If a rider wants to push forward he must signal the Road Captain and then pass him to ride ahead.

### 3. **Leading the ride**

The Road Captain leads the ride. Riders are expected to keep an eye on him for clues as to where to go next. Working in conjunction with the marshals, the Captain will also help to block off intersections to allow riders to pass without worrying about traffic. He will then pass back to the front. Sometimes the Road Captain stays in front and only the marshals do the intersection work, and sometimes he works with the marshals.

When a lane change is performed, the Road Captain signals the change and the marshal initiates it. This prevents lane-changing bikes from crashing into one another and also provides a safer block to traffic. Indicators are seen from the rear and a large column of bikes changing is less likely to be cut off.

### 4. **Stop co-ordination**

At fuel stops, the Road Captain will set up in a staging area he has previously chosen so that the line of bikes can assemble. After leaving, the Road Captain will wait until the marshal signals that everyone is ready to go before accelerating to highway speed.

## **5. Other duties of the Road Captain**

Other duties of the Road Captain include dealing with the police and other unexpected surprises, and making sure everybody has a fun, safe ride. The Road Captain is part of a team that includes the marshals, and is, by definition, an experienced rider.

## **A SHORT PRIMER FOR RIDING IN FORMATION**

To the rider who normally travels solo, the whole process of group riding can often seem very confusing. If the rider is not used to riding with others, even the competent, safety-prone rider can become a motorcycle menace the minute he/she joins friends in a group ride. Yet, orderly group riding requires no special skills. It does require the application of a few basic rules, a knowledge of some basic formations and hand signals, and some practice.

Within a few kilometres, a group of riders who make the effort can learn to manoeuvre in unison to become, in effect, a flexible, multi-machined, single vehicle.

### **1. In general**

The highway is not a good place to socialise. Motorcyclists riding in groups do not have any special privileges or rights. If you want to ride with others, you must do it in a way that does not endanger anyone or interfere with the flow of traffic.

By the way, it is illegal to ride more than two abreast in any single traffic lane.

### **2. Road Captain**

The first requirement of any well-functioning organisation is to have somebody who is in charge. In group riding, that leader is the Road Captain. It is up to him/her to see that all the riders are properly briefed on the riding positions, selects the routes and calls the signals. It is the responsibility of the Road Captain to organise, command, direct, and manoeuvre the group.

A good Road Captain is constantly aware that he/she is not riding as an individual and must keep in mind the safety and the needs of the group.

### **3. Keep the group small**

Avoid a mob scene. A large group tends to interfere with traffic and tends to be separated easily by traffic or red lights. Those left behind tend to do unsafe things in an effort to catch up. If the group is larger than four or five riders, it is usually best to divide it into two or more smaller groups.

### **4. Keep the group together**

Another way to avoid "catch-up" is to keep the group together. There are several ways to do this:

- Plan ahead: if you are the Road Captain, look ahead for changes. Give signals early so "the word gets back" in plenty of time. Start lane changes early enough to allow everyone to complete the change.
- Follow those behind: let the rear marshal set the pace. Use your mirrors to keep an eye on the person behind you. If he/she slows down, you slow down some. If everyone does this, the group will stay with the marshal.
- Know the route: make sure everyone knows the route. Then if someone is separated for a moment, they won't have to hurry in fear of taking a wrong turn.

## 5. Keep your distance

It is important to keep close ranks and a safe distance. A close group takes up less space on the highway, is easier to see and be recognised by car drivers as a group and is less likely to be separated by traffic lights. However, it must be done properly.

- Don't pair up: never ride directly beside another motorcycle. If you have to avoid a car or something on the road, you would have no place to go. If you have something to say to another rider, use hand signals (see point 7 below), or wait until you both have stopped.
- Staggered formation: the best way to keep close ranks, yet maintain an adequate distance is through a "staggered" formation(see point 6 below).

## 6. Staggered Formation Riding

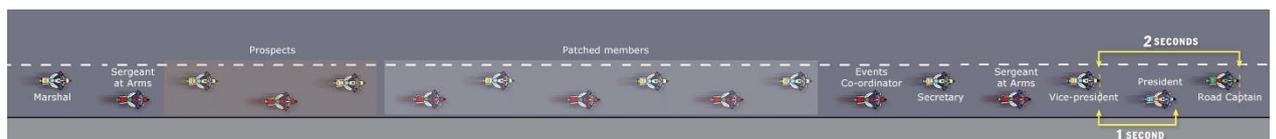
The Road Captain rides to the left side of the lane, while the second rider stays one second behind and rides in the right side of the lane. A third rider would take the left position, a normal two seconds behind the first rider. This keeps the group tight, but with a way out if needed.

Staggered formation can be safely used on an open highway. However, a single file should be resumed on curves, during turns and when entering or leaving a highway.

Two lane highways: when riders in a staggered formation want to pass another vehicle in the same lane, they should do so one at a time. When it is safe to do so, the Road Captain should pull out and pass. When the Road Captain returns to the lane, he/she should take the left position and keep going to open up a gap for the next rider. As soon as the first rider is safely by, the second rider should move to the right position and watch for a safe chance to pass. After passing, this rider should return to the right position and open up a gap for the next rider.

Four lane highways: the procedure would be the same as above, unless there is sufficiently light traffic so that the entire group could pass together, while still maintaining the left-right stagger and one- and two-second following distances.

### Member position when riding in formation



### Ride rules and regulations

- All Bikes will be maintained in a safe condition. Motorcycles with malfunctioning lights, brakes or worn tires (less than 2/32" of tread) will not be permitted to participate in a ride.
- All motorcycles will be fuelled (topped off) prior to arriving at the meeting area.
- When riding in a group, motorcycles will be ridden in a staggered formation.
- One rider will be designated as Road Captain. The Road Captain is responsible for planning, mapping and co-ordinating the ride.
- One or two riders will be designated as the marshal(s). The marshal is responsible for keeping all the riders in formation. Should a rider need to leave the formation, only the marshal will stop to assist the rider.
- Riders who elect to drop off a ride (i.e. they do not desire to go farther due to time constraints, prior commitments, etc.) will notify the marshal before doing so.
- The Sergeant at Arms is responsible for keeping the peace, enforcing Club rules, and the collection of monies or tolls etc.

On the open road... each person at his own speed and own time that he/she is comfortable with. If the rider wants to pass and ride at high speed, he/she may pass the Road Captain but just signal it to him.

If you press forward, you will wait at designated points for the rest of the formation to fall in.

## 7. Hand signals for communicating while riding

These signals do not cover every communication need, but they should fill in a lot of gaps. Remember, these signals must be seen to be understood. Acknowledge comprehension with a nod of the head or a flick of the dimmer switch.

The rider in the rear can flick the headlight to attract the attention of the forward rider, the forward rider acknowledges with a nod or "come alongside" signal, then the rear rider makes the signal.

These signals have been purposely kept left-handed to allow the right hand to remain on the throttle and brake controls for safety's sake.

