

Road Captain Training

Introduction

Being a Road Captain carries with it the responsibility for the safety and obeying the law for yourself and all the other riders in your group. Although we discuss and agree that all riders are ultimately responsible for themselves, good group riders are going to follow the lead of the Road Captain in order to not look bad and maybe to keep the group together. Beginning group riders will try to do the same, for much the same reasons, while becoming increasingly frustrated over the length of the ride. I have seen new members go on one group ride and never come back again. Group ride members will follow the leader even when the leader is not following the law or is riding beyond their capabilities. It's the nature of the Harley rider (never admit you're not capable). Road Captains should ride within reason and consider the level of the least experienced rider of the group. However, keep in mind that inexperienced riders will benefit from following and observing more experienced riders and will constantly improve when riding to their limits. Leading a group is often difficult for an experienced rider because of the different riding levels within the group but following the guidelines we will cover today, will make it easier for all concerned. You do not have to ride to the level of the least experienced rider but be aware of their capabilities and considerate for their welfare.

Suggestion box for any comments or rides you would like.

1. Safety on the road

Signals and hand signs

- Pass out Foot and Hand signs
- Cover and discuss
- Combination turn signals and hand use
- Learn most frequently used

Group size

- How many riders per group – 8 to 10 preferred – more if limited access highways.
- Enough Road Captains for lead and sweep (Use most experienced rider if no RC available for sweep)
- Optimum for the ride?

Formation and staggered riding

- Road Captain leads from front left 1/3 lane
- 2 second delay front
- 1 second delay diagonal/side
- Procedure for filling in dropouts-crossover one at a time

Staying together

- Ask slower riders to move to the rear – in front of sweep RC
- Keep a close tight formation – do not lag with major gaps as it invites cars to pull in or to pull out in front of you
- Verify comfort levels of riding – If possible to accomplish without embarrassment – last group in ride should be the least experienced riders. Explain there is no shame in inexperience.

Visibility on the road

- Running lights for night rides – do not use – too blinding or leader use only
- Running lights for day rides – okay to use for better visibility

Regrouping plan

Rides with multiple groups should not leave a scheduled stop until all groups have arrived or the reason for a group not arriving has been determined. Regrouping within a group should be treated as an emergency stop.

Emergency stops

The Distressed Rider (DR), their partner, and the sweep will stop to handle the emergency.

The RC will stop the entire group if possible and safe to wait for either information from the sweep or the DR, partner, and sweep to catch up.

If the RC finds no immediate safe stops for the group, the RC will continue to lead the group to the next planned stop or the destination. Large groups stopping on a high speed limited access highway is very dangerous and should be avoided whenever possible.

Cell phone communication and common sense judgment by the road captain will prevail.

In no case should a rider be left alone.

Rest/Fuel stops every 100 miles or every two hours, whichever comes first.

2. Plan the Ride

A. Know the destination

- Make sure they know you are coming if required
- Call to verify at departure with best numbers
- Verify expected arrival time

B. Plan the route

- Most scenic or fun to ride
- Least complicated within reason
- Minimal opportunities for separation
- Plan the stops for smallest fuel tank
- Use stops as potential regrouping points

C. Have possible alternate routes (ride)

D. Appropriate meeting points for North & South Groups

- Timing for meets
- Maximum wait times – 5 minutes
- Cell numbers in event of mix-up do not answer while riding

D. After the event – how do we return?

- Officially the ride ends at the destination
- Plan for return with unofficial grouping
- Discuss departure times and plans

Ride the Ride

A. Always pre-ride the ride

- Verify feasibility of route
- Look for road construction or potential hazards
- Verify the timing
- Look for potential separation points
- Plan you stops in real time – 15 minutes unless otherwise determined – notify group 5 minutes ahead of departure
- Know where these stops are and how large a group they can handle
- Know the parking situation at the destination

B. Adjust route or stops as necessary

- Document the actual route
- Put in contact numbers for the RC's
- Set departure time and expected arrival
- Make copies for distribution – minimal of one per Road Captain but preferred one for each bike.

3. The Ride

- A. Get waivers signed for non members.
- B. Check **local** HOG membership cards for expiration date. **National** HOG expiration date is also listed on the **local** card just above the **local** expiration date. Local ends December 31st of the current year. If they are expired, they must sign the waiver to ride with the group.
- C. All Road Captains should have a clipboard with waiver forms. Have copies of all forms and information sheets available for use. These forms and information sheets are on the HOG website under “Road Captain”.
 - 1. Ride sign in sheet
 - 2. Adult release form
 - 3. Minor release form
 - 4. Minor risk acknowledgement form
 - 5. Membership application
 - 6. INJURY REPORT form
 - 7. Alcohol guide
 - 8. Ride suggestion form
 - 9. Space Coast HOG Road Rules
 - 10. Safety rules while riding
- D. Give a pre-ride briefing to all riders. Verify that all of the briefing was understood and ask if there are any additional questions?
- E. Break riders into groups for the ride
- F. Assign RC’s to groups
- G. Pass out ride info sheets
- H. Arrange interval times. Distance between groups should not be less than ¼ mile.
- I. No “jack rabbit” starts
- J. No quick stops
- K. Slow in advance of stop signs and red traffic lights (**No right on red**)
- L. If traffic light turns yellow when advancing, stop if safe to do so. Check mirrors to see how close riders are. Think like a novice. Don’t base stopping on your abilities. Always think of the people you’re riding with. All of them, not just the one behind you.
- M. No more than 5 MPH over speed limit (speed limit unless good reason – staying with traffic – passing – getting group through traffic lights, etc....)
- N. Observe group and ride for slowest if at least traveling at the speed limit.
- O. Stop at safe place if riders lagging below speed limit to see if there is a problem.
- P. Try not to pass unless room for entire group.
- Q. Maintain speed after passing to allow all in. If anything, make this the time for maybe even more than 5 MPH over. Slow down once all are in.
- R. Have fun and ride safe!

We will use the group riding video to reinforce the safety aspects during the course – and of course any other video or material that fits.

Our goal is to ride and have fun. We should be safe while we're doing it, but it should be first and foremost – fun – for everyone.

The Road Captain has the responsibility for the entire group they are leading and should always consider the group over what they would like to do.

Examples

1. Ride within reason for the least experienced.
2. Unless absolutely impossible, wait until whole group can get out before entering a new road.
3. Continually scan mirrors for group status.
4. Do not publicly discuss rider's shortcomings.

All Road Captains should have the same consistency in leading so it really won't matter in whose group people ride.

Important pre-ride criteria

1. **Everyone should start the ride with a full tank of gas.**
2. **Check tires for correct pressure.**
3. **Review hand signals and be sure everyone is clear on them.**
4. **Dress for the weather.**
5. **Remind everyone the ride officially ends at the destination.**

Road Captain Qualification

- A. **Today's classroom presentations**
- B. **Skills Training**
 - a. **Practice these skills every ride**
 - b. **Call Head Road Captain for 1 on 1**
- C. **Ride 2nd position or sweep on 4 club rides**
 - **Visualize/Understand how YOU would respond to situations**
- D. **Lead a ride**
- E. **Rocker at the next HOG meeting**