



**Ride Captain Guidelines**  
**Blue Knights – BCV**



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## Mission and Objectives

The Mission of our Chapter is to Ride & Have Fun. The Blue Knights BCV is committed to the promotion of safe motorcycle riding practices. Many of the Chapter's activities involve riding in groups. It is important for the comfort and safety of all riders that everyone in the group has a clear understanding of the procedures followed by the Chapter in its group rides.

## Introduction

The Blue Knights International Law Enforcement Motorcycle Club is a motorcycle organization comprised of people who share two common interests - a law enforcement background and a love of motorcycle riding. Accordingly, the riding habits of its members, both individually and collectively, should reflect safe riding techniques. Whether you ride as an individual or in a group, to survive on the open road, your motorcycle riding habits and techniques must be constantly thought of as defensive. However, it is important to also recognize and remember that group riding is a team effort. To ride safely, you must rely on the cooperation of all riders in the group.

Motorcycle riding has its inherent risks, having said that The Blue Knights Chapter V does not in any way endorse excessive speed or unsafe operation of your motorcycle at any time. The Ride Director and Ride Captains will endeavor to plan and lead all rides in a safe, responsible manner to try and ensure all riders within the group experience a safe, comfortable, and enjoyable trip. Any individual operating their motorcycle in an unsafe manner, and/or operating at excessive speeds and/or while in a group ride disregard BKV Group Ride policy and guidelines assumes all risks and liabilities. The Ride Director or Ride Captain may direct that rider to leave the group.

The guidelines and procedures in this document are provided to Chapter members for the sole purpose of demonstrating a safe and approved method of riding in a group, changing lanes, or passing vehicles while riding in a staggered or single file group formation. Each rider participating in a group ride does so at their own risk and they are responsible for ensuring their own safety and the safety of their passengers.

A well organized, coordinated group of riders thundering down the road in perfect unison is truly an awe-inspiring site. This doesn't just happen. It takes knowledge, planning, coordination, training, experience, and practice. The following procedures, techniques and methods have been adopted from several resources all tried and true over many years of group riding. Some of the information has been adapted specifically for the Blue Knights.

A safe and enjoyable group ride is comprised of at least four key components. These are the Ride Director, the Ride Captain, the Sweep or Tail End Charlie and of course the Riders themselves.

This manual will provide you with the information, techniques, and knowledge of each of these components you must know and practice to achieve the goal of a safe, enjoyable, and awesome looking group ride which will truly help all of us to achieve the goals set out in our Blue Knights motto:

**"Ride With Pride". "As a Blue Knight, I pledge to act with honor and pride to promote motorcycling and motorcycle safety by being an example of the safe use, operation and enjoyment of motorcycles. I will work at all times to improve the relationship between the motorcycling law enforcement community and the general public.**



## General Guidelines

The highway is not a good place to socialize. 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. It is illegal to ride more than two abreast in any single traffic lane.

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 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.

It is important to keep close ranks and a safe distance. A close group takes up less space on the highway, making it easier for other motorists to see and recognize the group and the group is less likely to be separated by traffic lights. However, it must be done properly.

Do not pair up, never ride directly beside another motorcycle. If you must 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 later), 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.

## Ride Director Duties and Responsibilities

Ride Director is the name for the rider who coordinates a multiple-bike ride. A Ride Director checks that other riders are safe and comfortable during rides. Working as part of a team, the Ride Director is responsible for the safety of the riders and the smooth running of the ride itself. Duties include planning, thinking ahead, communications and rider education.

A Ride Director is a fundamental part of any ride planning. Especially where riders may number in the dozens, he/she must be well versed in the route. He/she must know about potential hazards, road conditions and any special events that are happening at the time of the ride. A Ride Director should, when possible, ride the route a day or two in advance to make sure that nothing has changed, will keep an eye on the weather, and should be present at ride planning meetings.

The Ride Director will brief the group before the ride. He/she will inform the riders about the pace of the ride, tell them about staggered formation, and will explain what the rules are. Some group rides require the participants to ride together in tight formation, while others have a looser, "at your own pace" style. The Ride Director will also answer questions and educate new riders in hand signals and other riding etiquette. Finally, the Ride Director 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 behavior is causing problems.

A qualified and proficient Ride Director will be aware of and ready to carry out all the responsibilities as follows:

- The Ride Director will maintain a roster of qualified and proficient Ride Captains and will designate mentors to aid in training and recruiting new Ride Captain candidates.
- The Ride Director is responsible for planning the ride schedule. Additionally, Ride Captains and candidates will usually meet quarterly (or at least semi-annually) with the Ride Director to discuss any necessary ride related adjustments and general chapter related business.



- The Ride Director is responsible for planning the ride including, the route, destination, accommodations, and other pertinent information.
- Will assign a Ride Captain and Sweep selected from other Ride Captains participating in the ride. If no other Ride Captains are available, the sweep will be selected at the discretion of the Ride Director.
- Will conduct the pre-ride briefing for all riders.
- May change the route as actual road and/or weather conditions dictate or may cancel the ride when necessary.
- Create, review, and update Chapter Policy and Guidelines for group rides.
- Appoints or dismisses Road Captains.
- Ensure Ride Captains have all information required to safely lead rides, including routes/destinations.
- Resolves disputes/disagreements for all ride related matters.
- Maintains records/mileage of Chapter group rides.
- May also perform the duties as Ride Captain during group rides.
- Report any concerns or problems to Chapter President.
- Conducts pre-ride briefings

## Ride Captain Duties and Responsibilities

The first requirement of any well-functioning organization is to have somebody who is leading the group. In group riding, that leader is the Ride Captain. The Ride Captain is the person who assumes responsibility for all aspects of a ride on the day it takes place. The Ride Captain plays a critical role in ensuring that all sanctioned rides are carried out in a safe and enjoyable manner as described in the Mission and Objectives section of this manual. The Ride Captain in conjunction with the Sweep will be well versed in the policies and procedures outlined in this manual and will apply them as required during all rides.

It is his/her responsibility to command, direct, and maneuver the group. A good Ride Captain is constantly aware that he/she is not riding as an individual. He/she must keep in mind the safety and the needs of the group.

The Ride Captain leads the ride. Riders need to keep an eye on him/her for cues as to where to go next.

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

It is important to note however, is that each group really contains two Ride Captains. The Sweep acts as a co-Ride Captain in most facets of the ride and has unique responsibilities (more on this later). The positions of Ride Captain and Sweep are sometimes referred to as the “Lead Bike” and the “Drag, Tail End Charlie or Tail Gunner”. Regardless of the name the duties and responsibilities remain the same. (The Sweep Duties and Responsibilities are covered later in these guidelines.)

A qualified and proficient Ride Captain will be aware of and ready to carry out all the responsibilities as follows:

- Leads groups during group rides.
- A Ride Captain must be a qualified and proficient rider to lead a Chapter Ride.



- Primary responsibility during rides is the overall safety and integrity of the group he/she is leading.
- Be familiar with the Duties and Responsibilities as prescribed by the BKV Ride Director and fully aware of all Chapter policies and guidelines for leading group rides.
- In addition to the Ride Directors briefing, the Ride Captain is responsible to hold an additional briefing with their individual group to detail how that group will be approaching the ride that day (speed limits, how aggressively curves will be approached, number of stops etc.) and ask if there are any questions.
- Is expected to lead a group of riders in a safe manner until the destination has been reached.
- Will execute his or her best judgment in situations not specifically covered in these guidelines.
- May instruct any rider to ride in a specific position within the group, or to leave the group entirely for reasons of misconduct, disorderly or unsafe riding, or for faulty and unsafe equipment.
- Should bring Ride Director and Ride Captain numbers and a cell phone to stay in touch and/or to call 911 whenever necessary.
- Will ask who on the ride is First-Aid and CPR qualified.
- Will lead at a pace that is appropriate for the riding abilities of the group, obeying all traffic laws.
- Watch their group carefully to ensure that everyone can keep a consistent pace, and no one is being left behind.
- Must lead a minimum of one (1) official Chapter event (ride and/or activity) within a riding season to maintain their proficiency as Ride Captain.
- In the event these requirements are not met, the Ride Captain must regain their proficiency by leading a Sanctioned Chapter ride while being evaluated by the Ride Director.
- In the event of an accident/incident, the Ride Captain shall thoroughly document the event and notify the Ride Director the circumstances of the event as soon as practical. Take photos if possible.
- Reiterate safety as discussed during initial briefing,
- Verify that riders are familiar with their return route and lead the return group ride when necessary.
- Appointed by Ride Director.
- Communicates with group by use of recognized hand signals.
- The Ride Captain may modify the routes depending on road or environmental concerns.
- Initiates lane changes, passing and group formation (staggered or single file formation) as required.
- At stops, the Ride Captain may set up in a staging area he/she has previously chosen so that the line of bikes can assemble. After leaving, the Ride Captain will wait until the Sweep signals that everyone is ready to go before slowly accelerating to highway speed.
- Must be familiar with routes/destination of ride.
- Assist the Ride Director in planning and coordination of rides upon request.
- Provide additional briefing depending on the group he/she is assigned to lead.
- May assign position to the other riders based on skill level.
- Should check with group members at stops to make sure there are no issues or problems that need to be addressed.



- If necessary, may direct any rider to leave the group if that rider poses a safety concern to other riders in the group.
- Report any concerns or problems to the Ride Director.

## Sweep Duties and Responsibilities

The Sweep also sometimes referred to as “Tail End Charlie” plays a vital role in maintaining the overall integrity and safety of the group. The Sweep is the last rider in the group which is the perfect position to observe the overall movements of the group and identify any potential problems with individual riders. It is important the Sweep maintains visual contact with the Ride Captain to watch for signals prior to a lane change. It is the Sweep who initiates the lane change when safe to do so. Some form of electronic communications such as rider to rider Bluetooth headsets can enhance the communication link between the Sweep and the Ride Captain. The Sweep should also be fully trained in the Duties and Responsibilities of the Ride Captain due to the fact under some situations the Sweep may be called upon to temporarily assume the lead.

The following is a list of Duties and Responsibilities for anyone who is assigned to the Sweep position in a group ride:

- Appointed by the Ride Director
- Will be observant of any hazardous conditions or conduct, take immediate corrective action as appropriate, and inform the Ride Captain at the earliest safe opportunity.
- In the event the group becomes split, and in the absence of a Ride Captain, the Sweep will use his or her best judgment to determine in which position (Lead or Sweep) to ride.
- When determining if the Sweep will assume the lead consideration will be given to the experience of the group with respect to:
  - Someone else being available to assume either position,
  - How safely the Sweep could move into the Lead position
  - How far apart the two groups are.
  - How long before the separated groups could rejoin.
- Should carry a cell phone to stay in touch with the Ride Director and other Ride Captains and/or to call 911 whenever necessary.
- Keep an eye on the other riders, watching for loose luggage, problems with bikes etc.
- When a lane change is signaled by the leader, the Sweep is usually the first to change the lane, holding back traffic.
- When a rider drops out of formation due to mechanical problems, breakdown, accident or other problem, the Sweep should ensure that this rider is safely off the road and help that rider with the problem. Once the problem is resolved, catch up to the group. If possible, contact the Ride Captain to advise of the situation.
- May take the place of the Ride Captain under certain situations
- Follows the last rider in the group.
- Secures traffic lane upon direction of Ride Captain before the group changes lanes.
- Report any problems or concerns observed during the group ride to the Ride Captain and assist in resolving the problem or concern.



## Rider Duties and Responsibilities

Everyone has the responsibility to:

- Arrive alert & well rested
- Arrive on-time at the departure point with a full tank of gas and ready to go.
- Pay attention during the Pre-Ride meeting to ensure you understand the day's itinerary.
- Inform the Ride Director & Sweep beforehand if you intend to leave the group during the ride.
- Ensure your motorcycle is in good mechanical condition, tires are in good shape and properly inflated. The TKLOCK checklist is an excellent resource for checking your bike.
- Wear appropriate clothing depending on anticipated weather conditions. "Layering" is the best method.
- Bring appropriate amount of fluid to ensure you don't become de-hydrated. A snack is also a good idea.
- Take advantage of rest stops and gas stops to avoid unnecessary extra stops later. Be ready to go when the rest stop is over.
- Stay with your group until each leg is over. If you want to change groups, inform both the Ride Captains.
- Be prepared to discuss situations that occurred during the ride. Accept constructive criticism with good humor. If you are uncomfortable with another rider in your group, discuss the situation with the Ride Captain at the earliest opportunity.
- Enjoy yourself.
- Ride your own ride within your own skill and comfort boundaries.
- Avoid changing positions during the ride without first discussing it with the Ride Captain.
- When it's time to depart each rider will indicate they are ready to go by either placing their hand on the windshield or by raising it.

## Ride Captain Safety Equipment

All Ride Captains are encouraged to carry a well-stocked first aid kit, and a basic tool kit to assist others who may need to make minor repairs. A recommended tool kit includes the following: assorted Hex-head wrenches, assorted Torx-head wrenches, Flat-head & Phillips-head screwdrivers, pliers/vice grips, electrical tape, and zip ties.

## Communications

Clear and precise communication is critical during the pre-ride briefing as well as during any critical incident. A few good tools to have on hand include the following information and documents.

- The Pre-Ride checklist and ride evaluation criteria form.
- Camera.
- List of Ride Director and Ride Captains Cellular Telephone Numbers.
- Headsets are a wonderful way to communicate, particularly between the Ride Captain and the Sweep but, are sometimes unreliable.
- Learn and utilize hand signals ensuring any signals are passed on to the rider behind you.





## Meeting Place & Time

To qualify as a chapter event a group ride must be sanctioned and approved by BKV Ride Director at which time it will be added to the calendar.

All Ride Captains and Sweeps participating in a ride will meet at least 30 minutes prior to the ride to discuss ride specifics. Any Chapter member(s) can request rides; however, it is the responsibility of a Ride Director to facilitate and coordinate all aspects of BKV Chapter rides.

Local rides with multiple groups going to the same location should use the same route used by the Ride Director. The Ride Director will establish the appropriate departure times for each group to assure the integrity of the smaller group concept, which is consistent with established safety protocols (written or unwritten).

Out of town overnight trips can have more than one ride plan, which may involve multiple Ride Captains going to the same destination. Each Ride Captain will lead their group as one ride and will play an integral role with the ride planning and related pertinent information for their ride.

## Pre-ride Briefing

Prior to each ride, the Ride Director will conduct a briefing for the entire group. During this briefing, the Ride Director will review the route to the destination, planned stops as applicable, procedure for return ride (i.e., on your own, organized groups, and routes home if needed) and if necessary, break the riders into groups for safety. The Ride Director will also review any safety topics as deemed necessary.

Ride Captains and Sweeps will be identified for each group. The Ride Director shall conduct the pre-ride briefing utilizing the briefing sheet. The briefing should be done as expeditiously as possible.

After the Ride Directors briefing Ride Captains shall hold their own condensed briefing with any pertinent information specific to the Group, they are leading.

## Group Riding

The basic formation for Chapter rides is normally the staggered formation. Environmental and/or road conditions will dictate when the Ride Captain places the group in a single file formation or adjust the speed or frequency of stops in accordance with perceived risks.

Environmental and road considerations may include, but are not limited to:

- Road width
- Presence of frequent or tight curves
- Road conditions (construction, sand, gravel, debris, potholes, etc.)
- Wide loads, pedestrians and/or cyclists
- Weather may cause wet roads, reduced visibility, or rider discomfort in cases of extreme heat or cold.

The spacing maintained by each rider is measured in time rather than distance. This means that the gap will be greater at faster speeds, and tighter at slower speeds.

- The '2-second rule' means that in staggered formation there is a ONE second spacing between each bike, thus a TWO second spacing between bikes in the same track.



- IF your reaction time to an unexpected threat is 1 second or less (studies have shown this to be a reasonable expectation), and IF your motorcycle skills are as good or better than those of the next rider ahead of you, then whatever the motorcyclist ahead of you does you should be able to do without running into him. (Including a panic stop, a turn across your path, or both.)
- The “2-second rule” should constitute your fundamental safety margin while riding in a group if you use it as a minimum spacing distance.
- On an open, quiet road with little traffic, it is often more comfortable to ride in a looser formation. This allows riders to enjoy more of the scenery. You should maintain sight of the bike in front of you and the bike behind you.
- In traffic or in town, a tight formation is less likely to be broken up by traffic, or changing traffic lights, and appears more as a single unit to other road users.
- Stop Signs - double up, proceed through as pairs and then return to normal staggered formation.
- Stop Lights - stop if the light turns red, regardless of your position in the group. Proceed on green when the way is clear.
- To perform a lane change, the Ride Captain signals the change, and the Sweep initiates it. The Ride Captain changes next once the lane has been cleared then, the rider behind the Ride Captain moves next and each rider behind in sequence. Do not change until the rider in front of you has moved. This prevents lane-changing bikes from crashing into one another and provides a safer block to traffic. Indicators seen from the rear of a large column of bikes changing lanes is less likely to be cut off.
- Lane Changes - pass signal back, each rider is responsible for their own safety. If possible, the Sweep should secure the passing lane on multiple lane highways.
- Passing traffic - single up while passing using your own judgment. The Ride Captains position in the passing lane indicates no oncoming traffic. Return to your own lane and proper formation as soon as possible.
- When merging from two lanes to a single lane the riders on the left move to the left side of the through lane, the riders on the right will move to the left in the merge lane and maintain their position in that lane until the merge has been completed. This is to prevent other traffic from cutting into the group. Once the merge has been completed all riders assume original position and spacing.
- If a rider leaves during the ride, the rest of the group should re-form the staggered formation by crisscrossing into the next vacant position. Although it would seem more efficient for the column directly behind the missing rider to move up, we do not recommend it because passing another rider within a lane can be risky.

*Warning: Passing may only be done where legal to do so!*

## Group Ride Categories

### Sport

- Speed may frequently exceed posted speed limit (+10-15km/h) depending on road/weather conditions at Ride Captains discretion.
- Curves and corners aggressively (Ride Captains discretion)
- Occasional stops (for fuel or meals)

### Tour

- Speed may occasionally exceed posted speed limit (+10-15km/h) depending on road/weather conditions at Ride Captains discretion.



- Curves and corners moderate speed (a bit higher advisory posted speed)
- More frequent stops (every 100-200km)

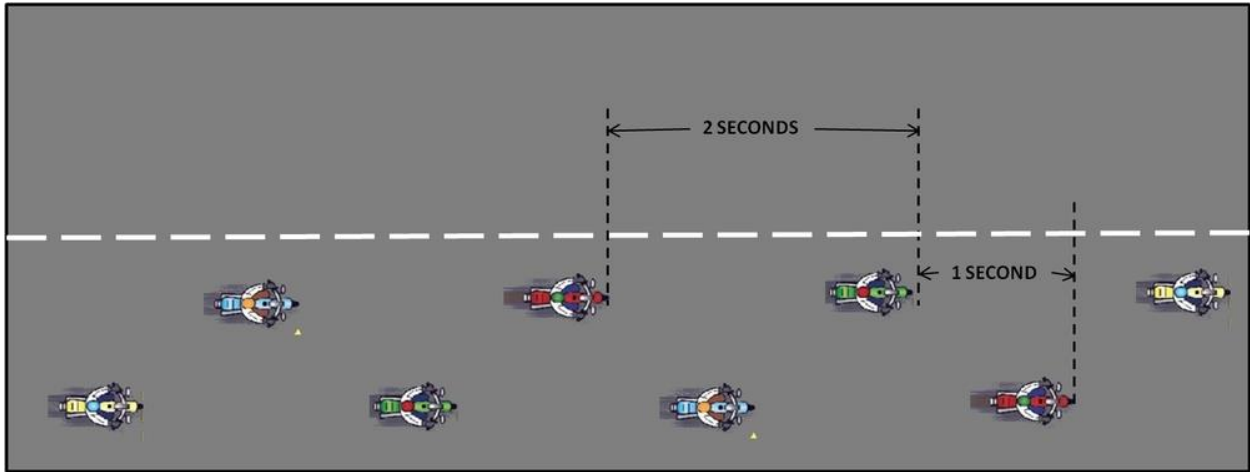
#### Casual

- Speed rarely exceeds posted speed limits
- Curves and corners more cautious (close to advisory posted speed)
- Frequent stops (approx. every 100km)

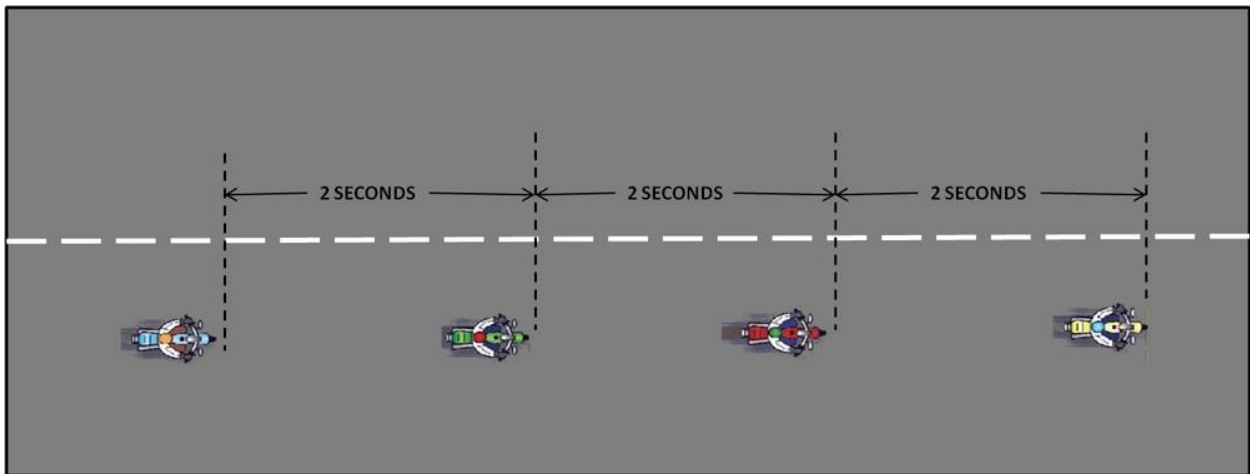


# Group Ride Spacing and Passing Diagrams

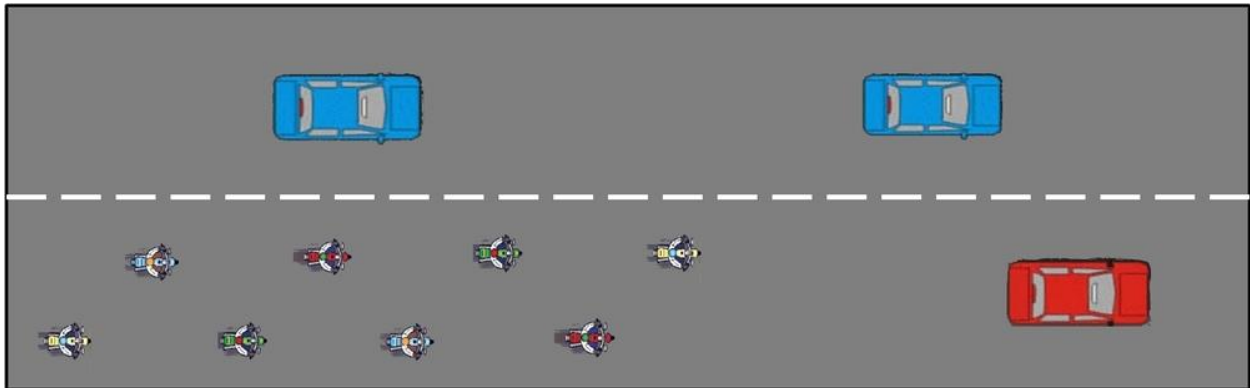
## STAGGERED FORMATION



## SINGLE FILE FORMATION

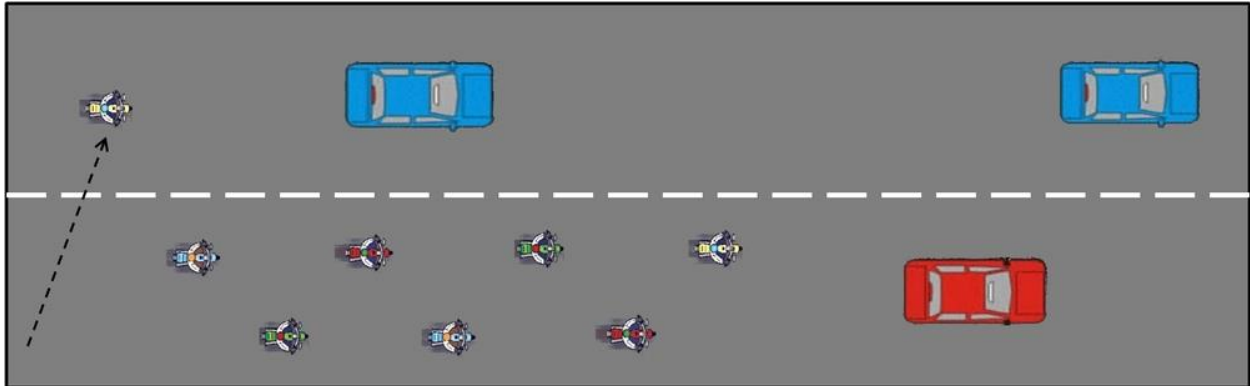


## GROUP APPROACHES A SLOW-MOVING VEHICLE

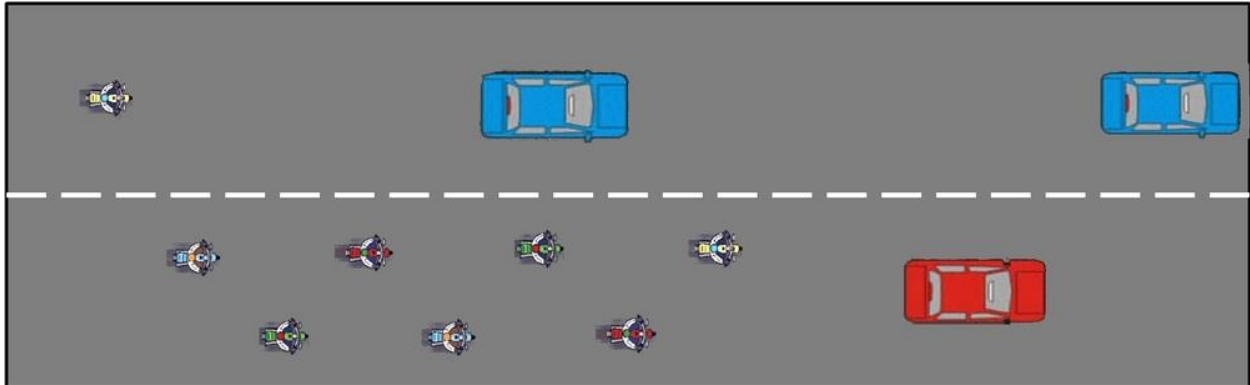




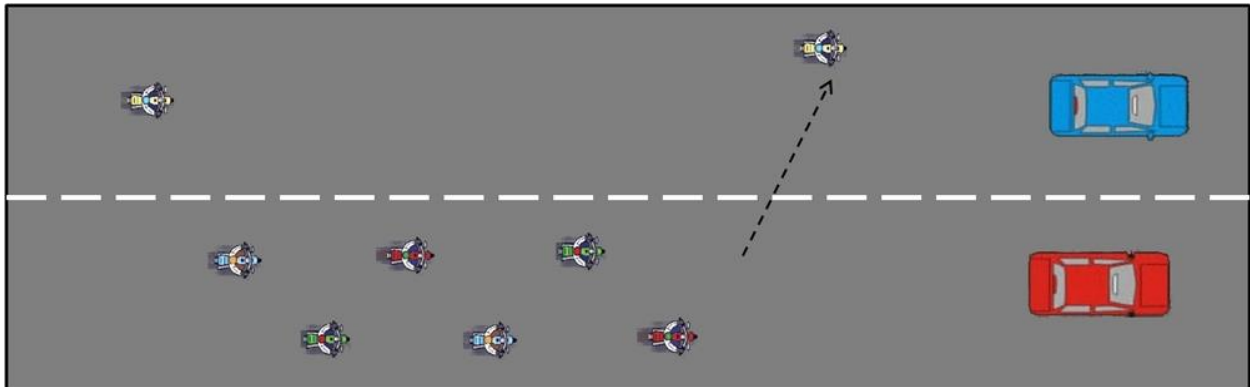
**SWEEP RIDER MOVES TO & CAPTURES THE LEFT LANE**



**RIDE CAPTAIN WAITS FOR TRAFFIC BETWEEN LEAD AND SWEEP TO PASS**

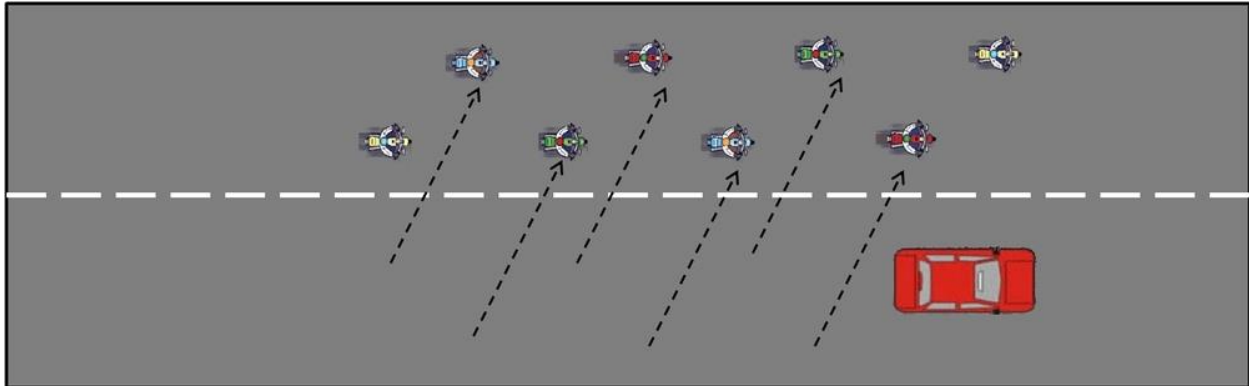


**RIDE CAPTAIN MOVES TO THE LEFT LANE**





## GROUP FOLLOWS RIDE CAPTAIN TO THE LEFT LANE



**Note:** Once the Ride Captain has initiated the lane change the rider closest to the Ride Captain moves over next then each rider consecutively. Do not change position until the rider in front of you has moved.

## Hand Signals

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.

Hand signals will 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 irrelevant.

Normally, the Ride Captain will initiate all hand signals except for 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 Ride Captain issues a hand signal, he or she shall hold the hand signal for sufficient time to alert the riders behind of an important instruction/notification. Each subsequent rider will maintain the hand signal until the rider behind acknowledges receipt by also performing the hand signal. The Sweep will perform the hand signal to acknowledge receipt to the rider in front of the Sweep.



**Speed Up** - arm extended straight out, palm facing up



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



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





**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







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



**Refreshment Stop** - fingers closed, thumb to mouth

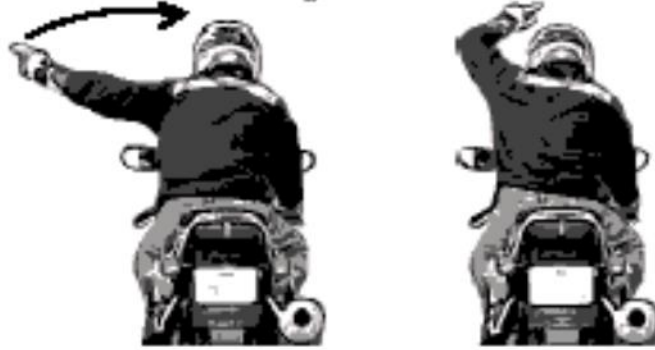


**Comfort Stop** - forearm extended, fist clenched with short up and down motion





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



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



**Highbeam** - tap on top of helmet with open palm down





## Accident or Breakdown Procedure

Recognizing the variables that will surface with each accident or break-down, the Ride Captain and Sweep will be called upon to use their best judgment in analyzing and responding to each situation. The guidelines below are provided as an aid in assessing and reacting to those situations.

### The Sweep

- The Sweep, along with another member of the group, will stop to assess the situation and/or:
- Ensure all other riders continue with the planned route,
- Direct traffic away from incident/accident and administer first aid to any injured parties,
- Call 911, if necessary,
- Remain with the disabled vehicle to provide any needed assistance as long as necessary, and
- You may be asked to coordinate the transport of the vehicle to a repair facility and assist the rider with necessary transportation if able.

### The Ride Captain

- Will continue to either the next planned stop, or to a safe location that will accommodate the remainder of the group.
- Contact the Sweep and obtain the information regarding the accident/breakdown.
- Determine what action to take after discussing the situation with the Sweep.

## Ride Captain Candidates

### Candidate Prerequisites

- Obtain the approval of the Ride Director and possess a valid operator's permit with motorcycle endorsement.
- Must be a confident, skilled rider and ideally have a significant amount group riding experience.
- Attend Group Rider Orientation and Ride Captain Training administered by the Ride Director.

## Ride Director Appointment

The Ride Director is an elected position with a two-year term. The Ride Director ideally, possesses good organizational skills, promotional skills, people skills and a thorough understanding of the Ride Directors duties and responsibilities.

On an annual basis, the Ride Director the Safety Director and Ride Captains will review these guidelines for revisions and updates. The Ride Director or designee will solicit comments and/or concerns from the Chapter Members before any final revisions are implemented.