

Star Touring & Riding Association Road Safety Guidelines

The purpose of riding in an organized group instead of an undisciplined pack is 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.

Once riding rules have been adopted by a club, EVERYONE riding with the club 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 the ride with the club.

1. Formation

Riding will be in a standard staggered formation unless the leader calls for single file. In staggered formation, the bikes form two columns, with the leader at the head of the left lane. The second bike will head the opposite, and will ride approximately two seconds behind the leader (and in the opposite side of the lane). The other riders will position their bikes two seconds behind the bike directly in front of them, which puts them one second behind the diagonal bike. This allows ample time for any quick maneuvers or hard breaking should such occur. This formation allows each rider sufficient safety space, and discourages other vehicles from cutting into the line.

2. Road Captain

The Road Captain is responsible for the safety of the entire formation. He must be aware of the length of the columns, and must gauge the passing of merges, highway entrances and exits, etc., to allow for maximum safety and keeping the group together. He must make sure that he leaves enough time/space for the formation to get into the appropriate lanes before exits, etc.

All direction comes from the Road Captain. The Road Captain makes all decisions regarding lane changes, stopping for breaks and fuel, closing of gaps, turning off at exits, any concerns of what lies ahead, accepting/rejecting radioed messages from other individuals, and so on. NO individual will assert himself independently without direction from the Road Captain to do so.

3. Tail Gunner

The Tail Gunner serves as the eyes of the Road Captain. He watches the formation, and informs the Road Captain of any potential problems within the group. He watches other vehicles, and informs the Road Captain (and anyone else with radios) of hazardous conditions approaching from the rear, such as vehicles trying to cut into the formation and trucks passing with potentially dangerous wind blasts. He will watch for merging lanes, and will move into a merging lane (or stay in a merging lane just vacated by the group) in order to "close the door" on other vehicles that may otherwise find themselves trying to merge into the formation. At the Road Captain's request, the Tail Gunner changes lanes before the formation, to secure the lane so the formation can move into it.

4. New Riders

The position of new (inexperienced with GROUP riding) riders within the group is significant. New riders should be positioned as close to the front as possible.

5. Lane Changes

All lane changes start with a radio request from the Road Captain to the Tail Gunner. The Tail Gunner will (when it is safe to do so) move into the requested lane and will inform the Road Captain when the lane is clear.

At this point, the Road Captain has three options:

I. Simple lane changes

This is an ordinary lane change, and can be used in most situations. After the Tail Gunner has secured the new lane, the Road Captain will put on his directional signal as an indication he is about to order a lane change. As each rider sees the directional signal, he also turns on his signal, so the riders following him get the signal. The leader then initiates the change. All

other riders change lanes too. The important concept is that NO ONE moves until the bike in front of him has started moving.

II. Block Lane Change

This can be used interchangeably with the Simple Lane Change. It requires a little more work, but it is well worth the effort. It's quite impressive to watch, and gives the riders a tremendous feeling of "togetherness". This sounds a little complicated, but is actually very simple to do.

After the Tail Gunner has secured the new lane, the Road Captain will put on his directional signal as an indication that he is about to order a lane change. As each rider sees the directional signal, he also turns his on, so the riders following him get the signal.

The leader then raises his left arm straight up. Each rider repeats this signal. Then, as the leader lowers his arm to point to the lane into which he's moving, he actually initiates the change. All other riders lower their arms at the same time and change lanes too.

This allows the entire formation to move from one lane to another as a single block.

III. Rear Fill-in

This is sometimes necessary if a long enough gap cannot be maintained in the new lane, for example when trying to move from the right lane to the center and vehicles from the left lane keep cutting into the opening.

After the Tail Gunner has secured the new lane, the leader (usually at the suggestion of the Tail Gunner) will call for the group to fill in the space from the rear. He signals this by raising his hand to shoulder height and "pushing" it towards the new lane. All riders repeat the signal, and the last bikes move into the space in the new lane ahead of the Tail Gunner, then the next-to-last bikes move in ahead of those, and so on until the Road Captain finally moves into the space ahead on the entire formation.

6. Emergencies

In the unlikely event of an emergency situation, the Road Captain will make every attempt to move the formation to the shoulder in an orderly manner. If a bike breaks down, let the rider move to the right. DO NOT STOP. The Tail Gunner will stop with the problem bike. The Road Captain will lead the group to a safe place.

7. Toll

For people in the group are using EZ-PASS, the riders will use two different toll booths next two each other. The riders on the left go through one booth and the riders on the right through the other. Upon exiting, they will resume normal riding positions.