

**California North Coast Chapter  
Harley Owners Group**

**Group Riding  
Protocol**

Effective Date: March 1, 2006

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## **WELCOME!**

Welcome to the California North Coast Chapter of the Harley Owners Group! The intent of this document is to provide all those who ride with us the useful information helpful in promoting a safe group riding environment. Please keep in mind that these "Suggested Do's and Don'ts" are not intended to restrict your freedom but instead, to help ensure that we all return home safely.

Our suggestions cannot encompass every possible set of circumstances. They are intended to serve as a basic guide for most situations. We ask each person to read, understand, and apply these guidelines, using their best judgment.

**REMEMBER THAT YOU HAVE THE  
ULTIMATE RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR  
SAFETY, AND ALWAYS RIDE WITHIN  
YOUR CAPABILITIES AND THAT OF  
YOUR MOTORCYCLE!**

**We hope you will enjoy  
riding with us!!**

## **2.0 All Group Riders' Responsibilities**

- 2.1 Observe the objectives and guidelines in order to assure the safety and the welfare of every individual within the group, and any surrounding motorists or pedestrians.
- 2.2 Follow the suggestions of the Road Captains in all situations, unless, in your opinion, those instructions place the rider or any other individual in an unsafe situation.
- 2.3 Maintain your motorcycle and other equipment in a safe riding condition.
- 2.4 Ride with head light on (and on low beam).
- 2.4 Ride with a "safety first" attitude. The safety of all individuals, whether or not they are part of the group, is of paramount importance.

## **3.0 Meeting Place and Departure Time**

- 3.1 Meeting place and departure times will be reviewed at the Members Meeting preceding the scheduled event, Chapter web page, or other means. We also ask that you arrive prior to the departure time to attend the rider briefing and with a full tank of gas.
- 3.2 Rider briefing will be held just prior to departure, to establish a schedule for gas and rest stops, inform the group of the intended route, provide other pertinent information, and review the group riding guidelines including formations, procedures, and destinations.

## **4.0 Riding formation and individual positions**

- 4.1 The preferred formation, under good conditions of road, traffic, and weather, will be a double row, staggered, in one traffic lane. The interval will be no less than two seconds between staggered riders.
- 4.2 Parallel riding is not acceptable except in parade formation or stopping for stop signs, traffic light, or other traffic control.
- 4.3 The Front Road Captain will lead the group, and typically rides just to the left of lane center. Other Road captains, may be assigned positions within the group, followed by the Rear Road Captain or "Sweep".
- 4.4 New members, guests, and any riders with little experience in group riding are asked to position themselves in a position designated by the Front Road Captain.
- 4.5 We ask each rider should maintain his or her starting line up position in the group until arrival at the destination. This allows each rider to become more familiar with the riding style and habits of those nearest him or her in the group. This is particularly important for the new or inexperienced riders.
- 4.6 Under certain conditions the Front Road Captain may signal the group to form a single file formation. The signal is the left arm held overhead with one finger extended. Drop back into a single file, allowing for more lane space, and increase the following distance from the rider in front of you. Standard formation on two lane roads will be single file.
- 4.7 Safety may dictate we form smaller groups due to the large number of riders, surrounding conditions or local ordinances. The Middle Road Captains are authorized to slow down their part of the group, take the Front position

of the new group, and proceed as the Front Road Captain of that group.

## **5.0 Speed, Intervals, and Distances**

- 5.1 The Lead Road Captain will attempt to establish and maintain a uniform, safe, speed, consistent with the ability of the least experienced rider, surrounding road and weather conditions, and safe riding practices based on his or her best judgment.
- 5.2 The Road Captains may choose to separate the group of inexperienced riders into a group of their own, consistent with expected or actual conditions.
- 5.3 All riders are asked to make an effort to maintain the same speed to minimize the effect of irregular speeds on riders at the rear of the group.
- 5.4 All riders are asked to maintain a safe distance and lane position between themselves and the rider directly ahead; to be consistent with existing road, traffic, and weather conditions.
- 5.5 Minimum Safe Following Distances:
  - 5.5-1 Within the group, a safe distance is generally accepted as a **Minimum two second delay** between the rider, and the next rider directly ahead. This means that there is a **Minimum** of a **One Second Delay** between staggered riders. Whenever a single file formation is employed, a safe distance is also generally accepted as a **Minimum** of a **two second delay** between the rider, and the rider directly ahead.

**We urge all participants to constantly ANTICIPATE an EMERGENCY.**

- 5.5-2 With respect to vehicles ahead of the group, generally accepted safe distance is defined as a **minimum** of a

**Three Second Delay** between the Lead Road Captain, and any vehicle directly ahead of the group.

- 5.6 A safe lane position is generally accepted as riding immediately to the right or left of lane center. This will keep the riders just off the center oil stain, while maintaining the staggered formation, distance between riders and other obstacles, and providing necessary lane protection (riders who regularly ride on the outside edge of a lane are often subject to sharing lanes with cars and trucks).

## **6.0 Traffic Lanes**

**NOTE: Lanes are counted from left to right. The left lane is often referred to as the "FAST" or "PASSING" lane, and is counted as lane number one. Remaining traffic lanes are then counted upward until the right most, or "SLOW" lane is counted.**

- 6.1 The Front Road Captain will attempt to guide the group in a single lane where the traffic flow appears to be most consistent with the speed of the group, using lane changes only when necessary to pass slower traffic or to avoid a hazardous condition and avoid blocking faster surrounding traffic.
- 6.2 On highways with two lanes in each direction, the group will generally travel in the number two lane (also known as the "SLOW" lane); allowing faster traffic to pass to left; except when passing slower traffic on the right.
- 6.3 On highways with three or more lanes each direction, the group will normally travel in the number two lane, keeping the right lane open for other vehicles entering and exiting the highway, and the left lane(s) for faster traffic to pass.

## **7.0 Lane Changes and Passing**

- 7.1 On multi-lane highway, the double row staggered formation will generally be maintained.
- 7.2 The Front Road Captain will hold his or her position and signal for a lane change when reasonably sure the entire group will be able to complete the lane change as a group.
- 7.3 All riders should hold their positions and pass the signal to the rear.
- 7.4 The Rear Road Captain (Sweep) will change lanes when he or she believes it is safe to do so, protecting the lane for the group, and allowing the Front Road Captain to see that the lane is clear and protected.
- 7.5 Riders will change lanes using the "follow the leader" approach. The Front Road Captain will change lanes first followed by all other riders moving from the front to the rear of the group.

**NOTE: We ask that NOBODY, except the Sweep, change lanes before the Front Road Captain. To do so may give the Front Road Captain the false signal that the lane has been safely cleared. ALWAYS make a HEAD CHECK before you begin the lane change, and maintain safe distances.**

- 7.6 There are times it will not be possible for the entire group to change lanes as above. When this situation arises, the Road Captain will signal for a turn, and signal the group with one finger extended into the air. This indicates that changing lanes as a group is not possible. The Road Captain will then change lanes when they believe it safe to do so. Everyone signals, head checks, and changes lanes front to back, as individuals, when they believe it safe to do so. Should the group become separated, regroup when it is safe to do so. Please use known good safety practices, **INCLUDING HEAD CHECKS.**

- 7.7 On a two lane road with two way traffic (one lane each way), a single file formation should be used when passing other vehicles. When he or she believes it safe to do so, the Front Road Captain may continue in the passing lane allowing other riders to see that the way is clear for them to continue the group passing maneuver.
- 7.8 If for any reason the group becomes separated, we ask you to merge safely back to the pack, returning to your original position, using known good safety practices. DO NOT feel it's necessary to break the world land speed record trying to catch up. The Front Road Captain will be aware and adjust according.

**NOTE: Be certain the road is clear, always make a HEAD CHECK immediately prior to initiating any maneuver which may cause you to cross other traffic paths. The Road Captain, your mirror, or what you saw just a second ago, are no substitutes for your own eyes, and judgment! PLEASE remember that YOU AND only you, ARE responsible FOR your safety. Remember that when dealing with cars and trucks, you will never win a contest against them. It won't do any good to be "Dead Right".**

## **8.0 Gas, Food and Rest Stops**

- 8.1 Riders with small capacity or limited fuel tank capacity should notify the Road Captain prior to the start of the ride.
- 8.2 If necessary, due to the length of the trip, gas, food, and rest stops are generally discussed and scheduled prior to departure. We will try to adhere to these scheduled stops as much as possible, depending on varying conditions as the trip progresses.
- 8.3 Deviation from the scheduled stops may be required due to varying weather, traffic, bladder conditions, availability of gas, rider fatigue, and other unforeseen circumstances.

- 8.4 Gas and rest stops are generally limited to no more than ten to fifteen minutes, depending on the size of the group. Remember, the last rider in the group waits the longest and therefore, has the shortest rest period.
- 8.5 Meal stops vary in length with the size of the group, but are generally held to a reasonable minimum.

## 9.0                    **Unscheduled or Emergency Stops**

- 9.1 Unscheduled stops for gas, restroom, or rider fatigue may be necessary. The Front Road Captain should be informed that a stop is necessary in order to lead the group in an organized fashion to the next convenient, safe, place to stop.
- 9.2 If a rider must pull over immediately, or has an accident, **ONLY** THE Rear Road Captain or last rider in the group will accompany that rider to a stop. The Front Road Captain should be informed if he or she is not aware of the situation. Once the Front Road Captain is informed, he or she will pull the remainder of the group over as soon as it is safe to do so. **Please resist the urge to pull over too. It can be very hazardous and increase the chance of accidents if we block the road with additional equipment and people.**
- 9.3 The only exception to the above would be that trained medical personnel would be expected to pull over also in the event there is an accident. They should follow safe riding practices when doing so, and those around them should yield and give them room.
- 9.4 We ask any rider who observes a problem with another rider's equipment, to inform that rider as quickly and safely as possible. If it appears that a stop is necessary, a Road Captain should also be notified.

## 10.0                    **Accidents**

10.1 In the event the group comes upon the scene of an accident, the Front Road Captain will stop the group at the earliest possible moment, keeping with known good safety practices. It may be necessary for the group to disperse and part separately to avoid creating additional hazardous conditions.

10.2 Members of the group may be asked to provide assistance in any practical way possible, including, but not limited to:

- Slowing, diverting, or stopping traffic in a safe manner, using flares if available.
- Providing aid and comfort to those involved.
- Calling 911 to notify the police, ambulance, and/or fire service as the situation demands.
- Maintain order and preserve the accident scene for police investigation.
- If possible, take photographs.
- If possible, obtain license plate numbers and vehicle descriptions, including driver descriptions, in the event of a hit and run violation. Remember, it will do no good to attempt chasing someone down just to end up in an accident yourself!
- Obtain names and addresses of witnesses if necessary.
- If necessary, maintain overall control of the situation until relieved by the proper authorities.

## **11.0 Hand Signals**

7.1 At all times, we urge that standard hand signals be used for: Changing the formation to a single row and back to double staggered, all turns, lane changes, slowing, and

stopping. Turn signal light should also be used at all times.

- 7.2 We ask that all signals be relayed to the rear of the group to allow all riders to take appropriate precautionary measures, and be aware of changes in speed and direction.
  - 7.3 Hand signals will be used at all times, to point out road hazards to following riders by pointing.
  - 7.4 Left arm held high, one finger extended over head indicates single file, and extended following distance.
  - 7.5 Left arm held high with two fingers extended over head indicates the standard staggered formation.
  - 7.6 Left arm held high, moving in a circle, indicates a U-turn.
  - 7.7 Left arm held high, one finger extended over head, followed by the Road Captain signaling and changing lanes, indicates the Front Road Captain will move as an individual, to whatever maneuver or position is required.
- 11.7-1 We ask the group to follow as individuals, in a "follow the leader" approach, signaling and following the Road Captain when you feel it is safe to do so.
- 11.8 Other signals may be developed and added as required.

## **12.0 Safety Equipment**

- 12.1 As mentioned previously, it is assumed that all riders will come to the ride with a well maintained motorcycle.
- 12.2 All group riders are encouraged to bring a well stocked tool kit to all club rides.
- 12.3 All group riders are encouraged to bring a well maintained First Aid Kit to all club rides.

12.4 All Riders with cell phones are asked to notify the Road Captain prior to the start of the event.

12.5 We ask the Front Road Captain to be responsible for bringing the following to the run

- First Aid Kit (Although we are not responsible for administering first aid).
- Route maps.
- Run information.
- New member forms.
- Cell phone.
- Liability Waivers.

**We insist that all non-members, including non-member spouses, guests, and minors complete a liability waiver prior to the start of every Chapter ride.**

# One final Thought...

If for any reason you are uncomfortable riding as we request, or are under the influence of alcohol or a controlled substance, we respect your wishes, but ask that you not ride in our group.

PLEASE REMEMBER THAT YOU HAVE THE ULTIMATE RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR SAFETY, AND ALWAYS RIDE WITHIN YOUR CAPABILITIES AND THAT OF YOUR MACHINE.

**Now let's Go Ride and Have Fun!**

