



# Sun Cities Power Riders Motorcycle Club

## Rider's Guide



May 1, 2006

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## **I INTRODUCTION**

Whether riding in a group or solo, your riding habits and techniques *MUST* be defensive. Group riding must be a team effort. To ride safely, all riders in the group must cooperate.

This guide is for our many new members and a refresher on some of the basics for our long time members. It is primarily intended to get everyone on the "same page" when it comes to anticipating the role of each rider/passenger on the ride. Knowing what to expect relieves most anxiousness and heightens the enjoyment of all participants.

It is also intended to help you get started and hopefully clear up some of the mystery in organizing, leading, or participating in a group ride. It is by no means a definitive handbook on the subject, nor, is it the only method to use to successfully conduct a group ride. It will get you started and hopefully avoid some of the unsafe "happenings" that you may have already experienced on previous group rides.

Organizing, leading, or participating in a group ride is an activity that a lot of riders would like to undertake. However, many riders are somewhat intimidated and reluctant to participate because they are not really sure how it's actually done. There is a good chance they have participated in a group ride and have become aware that there is a lot more going on than readily meets the eye. There is also the chance that they have been on some group rides that were conducted by riders who were long on enthusiasm but really didn't know what they were doing. This resulted in an unfavorable experience and no desire to lead or even join another such event.

Organizing a group ride is not the same as going for a ride with a few of your usual riding buddies. The people you usually ride with are almost always compatible as to the factors that will be discussed later. After all, that's one of the main reasons you all ride together. This guide is not intended for those types of very small rides. You need to approach an organized group ride from the standpoint that you do not automatically know what will make the ride both enjoyable and safe for the majority of the participants. The word majority is used because it is very doubtful that you will ever be able to please everyone every time. It is just a fact of life that some people will not be happy conforming to even common sense safe riding techniques. So be it. Your responsibility is to the group you are leading and not to the few who will always want to go their own way, no matter what.

In any event, it is hoped that the following will be of some benefit, remembering that these are only the basics.

## II SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

Safety is *ALWAYS* the first and foremost consideration! [Minimum safety clothing for all riders and passengers on a SCPR ride is a helmet, eye protection (windscreen, goggles, or face shield), and hand and foot protection (preferably that cover the ankle). Leather chaps are strongly recommended. Remember, you dress for the 'fall', not for the ride.] Road rash, or worse, really takes the enjoyment out of any ride. Riding in an unsafe manner just about guarantees much lower turnouts for future events. Most riders are very quick to recognize when they're in an unsafe situation and will normally avoid them in the future. Most of the "rules" that are discussed later are really aimed at keeping everyone as safe as possible.

Planning and predictability are the keys to a safe ride. The "*plan*" makes the "*predictability*". Predictability in the form of a well thought out preride briefing also raises riders' confidence levels as to how they perceive the ride will be conducted. The better the planning, the fewer questions other riders have about what they can expect to see from their leaders and other riders in the group. That is really the reason for the rules and suggestions that follow.

You really have to think about safety both in the planning and during the ride itself. Make sure everyone understands this before the start of the ride. For example, carry a First Aid Kit on the ride (if you have room to do so) and let everyone know who has it in case of need. Also, be aware of who has had any type of emergency training such as First Aid, CPR, etc.. You hope you never need this but then again, you never know.

Another point to consider is the possible physical limitations of the participants. Age is a wonderful thing, but it should be considered, too. There are riders who have poor night vision and/or other physical limitations who need to be considered. And no, we're not referring to the ever popular T.B. (tiny bladder) problem that always seems to crop up twenty minutes after a breakfast or pit stop. However, even that needs to be considered. A rider who is uncomfortable or is seriously distracted by any physical condition is not going to enjoy himself/herself and will most probably not be as safe a rider.

ALL traffic and speed laws should be observed at all times. There are no "special" laws for motorcycles. This needs to be repeatedly stressed. You would be surprised at how many riders think it's okay (or even required) to blast through a red light, cross a double yellow line, or exceed the speed limit just to stay up with the group. Point out that it is much better to get temporarily separated from the group than it is to end up as a Buick hood ornament. Methods that will allow temporarily separated riders to rejoin the group will be discussed, however, you need to point out that separated and even lost is much better than body casts, stainless steel bone pins, and skin grafts.

One last safety pointer: Everyone on a group ride should remember that it is always better to drop out and go his/her own way if he/she feels uncomfortable or unsafe for any reason. You and you alone should be the only authority on whether you feel

safe, and you should act accordingly.

### **III PARTICIPATING IN THE RIDE**

- All Riders are responsible for their own safety at all times and will be required to ride in a safe manner or leave the ride.
- ALL Speed and Traffic Laws should be obeyed by everyone at all times. Additionally, remember that, like it or not, you are representing everyone on two wheels during a group ride. Be a courteous rider and give cars and trucks every consideration.
- Drinking and driving is never a good idea and should be totally avoided while participating in a group ride.
- The normal riding formation is the staggered formation as described later. This formation provides the best safety margin of reaction time and space as each rider only uses one third (either right or left side depending on the stagger position) of the lane. Heavy, very slow traffic may require that you ride in a side by side column of twos for a very short distance. The staggered formation, complete with the proper safe interval, should be immediately resumed as soon as conditions allow.
- All riders and passengers are responsible for knowing what all the hand signals mean and for immediately passing all signals from the Ride Leader to the following riders. The most common hand signals are covered later in this guide.
- Dress or pack according to the weather you may encounter during the ride. "Layering" of clothes is the key. Being too hot, too cold, or uncomfortable from a sun or wind burn will make you a less safe rider and can lead to an unfortunate situation not only for you but others on the ride. Carrying a water bottle is always a good idea.
- All riders should insure that their motorcycles are in a safe operating condition, have gas (it is always bad form to arrive for a ride without having first topped of your tank), and are generally ready to go. It is no fun to crash because of a bad tire on your motorcycle or someone else's machine. It is also very embarrassing to be asked to leave the ride because you are riding a rolling disaster and constitute a danger to everyone else. Remember, the Tail Gunner will help if you encounter problems during the ride, however they may not be so inclined if you started out knowing that you had a problem.
- All riders are responsible for knowing as much as possible about the route, times, stops, etc. You should arrive at the departure point ten to fifteen minutes before start time to hear everything discussed at the pre-ride meeting and to familiarize yourself with any maps or written instructions that may be provided. This contributes to a

safer ride and adds to the enjoyment. It is less fun just following people around not knowing where you are going, not knowing when you will be able to take care of that last cup of coffee, or where (or when) the next gas stop is.

- All riders should clearly signal the Tail Gunner if they decide to leave the ride for any reason. Don't make him/her wonder if you are having trouble and follow you to see if you need help.
- Riders should not speed up suddenly should a gap develop between them and the motorcycle in front. Rather, they should accelerate slowly until they catch up and are back in position. This will help prevent the riders in back from over reacting and possibly running into the group when they suddenly catch up.
- Riders should signal the Ride Leader when they have to pull over for an emergency by flashing their lights or calling on the CB. All other riders are responsible for passing this signal forward until the Ride Leader acknowledges that he has seen it. Remember that it is normally the Tail Gunner's responsibility to stop and offer assistance and that no more than one other rider should stop to help the Tail Gunner as it is generally not safe for a larger group to park along the side of the road. The Ride Leader will signal the group when it is safe to pull off the road should he/she feel it is necessary.
- Turning at an intersection, each rider should stay in his/her respective lane position throughout the arc of the turn unless a single file formation is required and signaled for by the leader.
- Entering a parking area, all bikes should park together if possible. Take note of what the Ride Leader does (e.g. parallel park, back -in, etc.) and do the same.
- Unless you are one of the leaders setting the pace it is not a good idea to use cruise control while on a group ride as it is one of the main causes of the yo-yo effect.
- An important part of the group riding is "consideration". Have consideration for each member of your group and all other groups on the ride. Give consideration to all other vehicles on the road. RIDE FRIENDLY. If you are in back of the group, ride with your headlight(s) on low beam.

## **IV RULES OF THE ROAD**

### **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

**RIDE LEADER** - The Ride Leader is the leader of the ride. As the leader, he or she is responsible for setting an example for the group. The Ride Leader exercises total

control over his/her own riding preferences and follows the ride plan while simultaneously providing clear direction to the group, constantly monitoring the group for signals being passed forward, trouble, or any situation which could result in an unsafe condition. In short, the Ride Leader should act in the most disciplined and safest manner possible.

*Note:* Nowhere in the preceding description were the terms "fastest" or "bravest" used. These are terms reserved for racing which is absolutely another event altogether.

- The Ride Leader always rides at the left front position so that he/she has the best view of the route of travel.
- The Ride Leader sets the pace according to the ride plan which should indicate a comfortable speed within the posted limit. Keep in mind that (a) riders at the end of the group may have to ride a little faster to "catch up" if gaps develop in the main group, (b) it is also dangerous to set too slow a pace and impede traffic, (c) when moving from a stopped position, the Ride Leader accelerates at a rate that will allow all other riders to get regrouped as soon as possible, (d) the Ride Leader rides at a reduced speed until the formation is "closed-up" to avoid an "accordion" effect, and then attain the posted or planned riding speed and (e) when entering freeway ramps accelerate to maximum legal speed when merging. Do not decelerate until well off the freeway when exiting so those behind are not forced to slow in high speed traffic.

*Note:* No one should pass the Ride Leader without prior agreement, and only then for a specific reason. Safety considerations make this an absolute must.

- The Ride Leader determines both the direction and lane of travel on a multiple lane road or highway. He/she is responsible for clearly (and in a timely manner) signaling all changes in speed, lane use, direction, and hazards (such as road debris, construction, broken or slick pavement, road kills, etc.). Everyone needs to understand that the Ride Leader will continue on to a safe turn around location should he/she miss or purposely go past a turn in the interest of safety. Riders should avoid second guessing the Ride Leader and start making independent decisions that can put both themselves and other riders in danger.

*Note:* The Ride Leader must have the ability to pick the safest lane in traffic and to position the group in the appropriate lane for turns, stops, avoidance of road hazards, and when multiple lanes merge down to a single lane. Again, safety considerations make this an absolute must.

- It is advisable for the Ride Leader and Tail Gunner (discussed later) to individually or divided between them carry some basic "emergency" type equipment such as a first aid kit, fire extinguisher, flash light, road flares, canteen (water), portable phone, maps of the general area, basic tools, and whatever else is appropriate for the particular ride.

- The Ride Leader is replaced by the next rider in line if he/she has to drop out for any reason. There should always be a competent person in charge of the ride. Consideration should be given to who is placed in this secondary position.
- The Ride Leader may in fact deviate from the ride plan as covered at the pre-ride meeting if safety considerations so indicate.

**TAIL GUNNER** - The Tail Gunner brings up the rear of the ride group.

- The Tail Gunner always rides at the left rear position so that he/she has the best view of the group and route of travel.
- The Tail Gunner maintains the pace according to the ride plan and the pace established by the Ride Leader. No one is allowed to fall behind the Tail Gunner. Any rider who is not experiencing difficulties and still cannot maintain the established pace is automatically off the ride and on his/her own. No hard feelings.
- The Tail Gunner is responsible for determining when the group is ready to leave the start location and any intermediate stops. He/she signals to the Ride Leader to proceed, and watches out for traffic until all of the group is underway.
- The Tail Gunner is responsible for, and provides assistance to, any rider who encounters problems and has to either slow down or drop out of the ride. No more than one other rider should stop to help the Tail Gunner provide assistance as it is generally not safe for a larger group to park along the side of the road. If at all possible, the Tail Gunner should have (or be supplied with) a portable telephone and the appropriate emergency phone numbers to be used in the event of a breakdown or a mishap.
- The Tail Gunner is replaced by the next rider ahead of the Tail Gunner if he/she has to slow down or drop out for any reason. There should always be a competent person in the tail position. Consideration should be given to who is placed in this position to replace the Tail Gunner.

**ELEMENT LEADER(S)** - Each element consists of two motorcycles. The Elements are positioned between the Ride Leader and the Tail Gunner. (See Appendix III)

- The Element Leader rides to the left of the lane with the second motorcycle riding to the right and behind in a staggered formation. The Element Leader will strive to maintain a three second interval between his/her motorcycle and the second motorcycle of the element immediately ahead. This three second timing will provide a safe distance between elements regardless of speed (the faster you go the more distance the three second spacing provides) as well as providing a passing area for other vehicles that want to pass your formation.

- The second motorcycle in each element will strive to maintain a one second interval behind his/her Element Leader. The one second spacing between motorcycles, regardless of speed, within an element provides a safe distance with lateral spacing as well in the event the Element Leader should move right for some reason. Again, the faster you're traveling the more distance the one second spacing provides.
- There will be times when the Ride Leader signals for single file riding (e.g. rough road, twistys, wet or icy roads, sightseeing). This is an automatic change to a three second interval between all motorcycles.

*Note: Timing spacing* is easily accomplished by choosing something that the motorcycle ahead (the one you are taking spacing on) passes (such as a pavement break, a shadow, a light pole, etc.) then counting three seconds (one second for the number two motorcycle). If you pass the same place before you get to your count, you're too close. If it takes longer than your count to get there then you're too far back. Adjust your spacing accordingly then count again. The timing exercise should be done, as a minimum, as the group's speed changes, but should also be accomplished periodically to maintain the proper safe spacing.

## **GROUP LEADER(S)**

A very large group may make it advisable to divide the riders into logical groups and name one or more Group Leaders. They function under the direction of the Ride Leader as leaders of their group(s). In this day and age of very crowded streets and multi-lane highways to contend with it is highly suggested that the ride be broken down into groups of no more than ten motorcycles each for ease of traffic management and safety.

- A Group Leader always rides at the left front position of the group so that he/she has the best view of the Ride Leader, the riders ahead, and the route of travel.
- A Group Leader, in essence, takes over as Ride Leader for his/her group should the main group become divided due to traffic conditions, stop lights, stop signs, etc.. He/she functions as the Ride Leader for their group and all the other groups following them until they are able to rejoin the main group. All rules that apply to the Ride Leader apply to the Group Leader(s) while they function in that capacity.

Group Leaders share with the Ride Leader the responsibility for the following:

- Creating the opportunity and the road space required for other motorists to safely pass through the group in order to exit or enter the route of travel.
- Insuring that all traffic laws and safe riding techniques are being observed.
- Helping breakup and reform the group as a result of stop lights, stop signs, flag people, traffic conditions, etc.. They should take over temporary leadership

of any stray riders resulting from one of these conditions as soon as safety allows.

- Helping pass all signals from the Ride Leader to the following group of riders.
- The Group Leader will select a group Tail Gunner.

*Note:* Group Leaders will strive to maintain a spacing of not closer than thirty seconds nor farther back than one minute (as a guideline) behind the last motorcycle of the group immediately ahead. Depending on your speed, this could be between a half mile and a mile between groups, well within CB radio range of the group ahead. If the groups get bunched up because of traffic congestion, traffic signals, etc. then the Group Leaders will regain their spacing as soon as conditions permit. Remember, the idea here is to break a single large riding group into more manageable smaller ones, not to create several individual rides.

## **V FORMATION RIDING**

The objective of motorcycle formation riding is to safely facilitate the use by others of the highway also. Too many cycle groups feel they have the "right" to impede other traffic in order to stay together. This can cause dangerous situations as well as "road rage".

Each rider in an element should be aware of the road conditions in front of his/her element partner and anticipate possible moves. This is especially important on poor roads, when passing, or in traffic congestion.

Staggered Riding - The lead motorcycle (Ride/Element/Group Leader) should be in the left 1/3rd of the lane, the second motorcycle should be in the right 1/3rd of the lane.

Always stay in line with the motorcycle in front of you and do not switch between left and right side of the lane unless there is a road hazard in your path. The objective is to keep as tight a group as possible and yet have enough separation to allow for required safe maneuvering room.

Passing Other Vehicles - Preposition yourself for the pass by being far enough behind the vehicle you are going to pass to be able to see clearly down the road for an "oncoming traffic" check. Signal, and if you have a passenger, have the passenger signal as well. Do a mirror check, then a head check of your blind spot, to make sure no one is passing you. Accelerate and change lanes. Remember, you legally cannot exceed the speed limit so use your good judgment. Before returning to your lane, signal again, make another mirror check and a head check, to be sure there is space between you and the vehicle you are passing, and anyone else who is also making a

pass. Return to your lane riding position and turn off your blinker. To be safe, no more than one motorcycle element should pass at the same time. Never have the last motorcycle pull out and slow traffic so that the group can pass as a unit. If there isn't enough room for the element to safely pass...then there isn't enough room for the element to safely pass. Don't attempt it until there is. Safety, good judgment, courtesy and road manners should be considered before making a move.

When Being Passed - Allow the vehicle to pass you safely. The gap created by the three second spacing between elements should allow the passing vehicle room to pull in ahead of you, if necessary, to pass in segments rather than trying to make it all at one jump. Passing or getting passed anytime can be hazardous so use common sense and a safe approach. Watch for vehicles that try to crowd you during their pass.

## **COMMON HAND SIGNALS**

Hand signals should be simple, easy to learn and understand, and few in number. As soon as you see a signal given, you and/or your passenger should immediately repeat the same signal so the rider(s) behind can see it and have the maximum amount of time to react. There really are no standard SCPR hand signals so these are offered only as a suggestion and are in addition to the normal Department of Motor Vehicles approved hand signals. Also note that for safety reasons all signals are given with the left hand so as to allow the right hand to have full control of the throttle and front brake.

- Start Your Engine - The Tail Gunner waves his hand in a circle high over his/her head in a "wind 'em up" motion.
- I'm Ready To Go - When your motorcycle is running, place either your left or right hand on top of your windshield. If you do not have a windshield, raise your hand high enough for the Tail Gunner to be able to see and gauge when everyone is ready to depart.
- Slow Down - Left arm down at about a forty-five degree angle with the palm toward the back.
- Speed Up - Left arm straight out to the side with the palm up. Raise arm up to about a forty-five degree angle.
- Hazard In The Road - Point with left hand at the object or situation as best you can. If the hazard is to the right side and a right hand is available (e.g. you're using cruise control or you have a passenger) pointing with the right hand is permissible (pointing with your right foot will get the idea across also).
- Turn - Use your turn signals whenever possible in addition to the DMV approved

hand signals.

- Need Gas - Point at your gas tank.
- Need Food/Drink - Point at your mouth.
- Comfort Stop - Pat the top of your head.
- Turn Signals are On - Left arm out and bent up at the elbow, hand facing rear and open and close your hand rapidly.
- Form Single File - Left arm out and bent up at the elbow and hold up one finger.
- Form Double File - Left arm out and bent up at the elbow and hold up two fingers.
- Form Staggered Formation - Left arm out and bent up at the elbow and hold up three fingers.

## **VI LEADING A RIDE**

This section is presented in the general order that events should take place. For example, the very **first** thing you need to do is to pick a date, time, destination, etc., and then let people know that the ride is going to happen. This can be done verbally at the monthly meeting, via a flyer, e-mail, or any other way that is effective. All the various detailed plans need not be completed at this point but enough should be decided to give a fairly representative flavor of what the potential participants can expect. You can then gauge (show of hands, sign-up list, boos, hand gestures, whatever) about how many riders you can expect and plan accordingly during the detailed planning stage of the ride. By the way, don't forget to list the event on the groups official events calendar in the monthly newsletter so that no one intending to go on the ride forgets the main details.

**Second** is to, either by yourself or with the other riders who've agreed to help, lay out the detailed plans for the ride as discussed in a previous section. By now, you should be well aware of just how important to the overall success of the ride this detailed planning really is. Document your plans so you can cover them at the pre-ride meeting. You'll probably want to do a fairly neat job of documenting your plans if you are going to have a large turn out and plan to pass out written information to the participants.

**Third** is to touch base with the appropriate people at the starting location, the final destination, the intermediate stops, and any appropriate law enforcement agency if you are planning a really BIG ride. Make any required changes to your detailed ride

plan at this point.

**Fourth**, if you have not already done so, is to pick or get volunteers for your road crew. Remember you need at least a Ride Leader and a Tail Gunner even for a small group. They need to be fully briefed prior to the day of the ride. Don't wait until the last minute to do this as you can have a bunch of small stuff come up at the last second that will distract you. By the way, you may want to lead the ride, but then again, you may not if this is the first ride you've organized. Working with an experienced road crew is an excellent opportunity to learn how it should be done. This, of course, is your choice.

**Fifth** takes place just before the actual ride departs. That is to hold a pre-ride meeting and hand out any written instructions, details, or maps you feel are appropriate. You need to cover both the details of the ride and the rules of the road. Remember, the more "predictable" you and the ride are in the eyes of the other riders, the smoother the ride will turn out. This will help insure that you have both a good time and a safe event. Be very sure to name the Road Officers for the ride to the group.

**Last** is to have the ride, then, although not done as often as it should, it is a good idea to meet informally with the road crew and discuss the ride. This should be done as soon as practical so no one forgets anything and you and the road crew can benefit from the experience. This allows you to make any future changes that will be effective.

## RIDE CONSIDERATIONS

Always let everyone know what type of ride you are planning. An informal ride (not a "regular" scheduled ride) may be conducted with none or only a few of the guidelines outlined here. A SCPR Scheduled Ride should require that everyone understand and follow all the "rules". A casual two hour fifty mile ride appeals to one type of rider while an eight hour four hundred mile ride appeals to an entirely different type. The main thing is to tell them what you have planned. This will avoid the dissatisfaction and possible unsafe situation that can result from riders finding themselves "in over their heads". It's no fun when some riders think they are going on a casual ride across the county and then find themselves on a ballistic three states home before dark endurance blast. Remember that what may be a medium duration casual ride to you could turn out to be a rather long exercise in trying to keep up on twisty roads for the less experienced.

- **DURATION** - As best you can, carefully calculate (and be sure to announce) the total time duration of the ride. This should be broken down into the projected riding times for each of the ride segments, the number and duration of the various stops, and the total duration to the final destination. This gives the riders/passengers who are not interested or are not able to commit that much time on that particular day an opportunity to pass or make other arrangements. They may choose not to go or to

only go part way. The main point is that you will not turn them off from future rides with an unwelcome sore butt surprise they hadn't planned on.

- **DESTINATION** - It's your ride and you get to pick the destination. Most people simply just love to ride their motorcycles, and use the destination as their excuse. However, you need to give the destination some thought if you want others to go along. Not everyone gets the same level of enjoyment out of a long ride to a remote lake to watch someone hunt ducks with a bow and arrow. Likewise, not everyone is just filled with joy over the thought of a forty mile ride to Wanda's Christmas and Lace Shop. Enough said. Just make real sure you tell everyone in a loud and clear voice what you have in mind. It's up to them from that point on.

If there is an eating establishment in your plan, be sure to call ahead of time to make sure they can "handle" the size of the group. (Hint: Make sure they will accommodate separate checks, some places won't.)

- **LENGTH** - You need to tell everyone just how far you plan on taking them. Long on experience riders/passengers know that it's the saddle and saddle hours, not the miles, that are the real limiting factors. Those less experienced will grumble and moan about the total length of the ride if caught unaware even though other factors may put it well within their comfort zone. You can "sell" a long ride if you break it down into manageable small chunks and explain why they won't get overly tired.

- **ROUTE** - Always take great pains to carefully plan and then describe the route. Strongly consider making and handing out maps if you will be leading a large group, using a complex or high traffic routing, or if you suspect you will have a significant number of relatively inexperienced group riders. One look is worth a thousand typing errors, as they say. It is not enough for everyone to just know the destination. They should also know the entire route complete with the intermediate stops (and approximate times) so that they can link up should they get separated for any reason. It's no fun to suddenly find yourself separated from the group with no earthly idea how or when to join back up again.

Unless you are planning a "scenic ride", lay out the most direct route to your destination. Few riders really like Interstate rides but they do have their place. They offer the advantage of all traffic moving in the same direction, no left turn or oncoming passers using your lane thrills, no cross traffic, and no traffic lights or stop signs to separate the group. If you are planning a "scenic ride", be sure traffic conditions will allow it. For example, county fairs, rodeos, car shows, horse shows, road construction, etc. can really mess up traffic and present the group with complications they don't need.

For safety purposes, try to lay out a route that incorporates as many right turns as possible ("right on red", no cross traffic negotiations, etc.) and avoid left turns whenever possible. Along the same lines, try to make all turns in congested areas using traffic lights with turn lanes. This is safer and helps keep the group together.

Consider pre-riding the ride you have planned to make sure that "what you see is what you get". It will sometimes avoid embarrassing moments such as planning a good "twisty" road segment only to show up and find the road is closed for repaving, or the restaurant you were going to use is now a video arcade. You get the idea.

- **INTERMEDIATE STOPS** - The number and frequency of the intermediate stops needs to be carefully considered in light of who you expect to go on the ride. This is one of those key areas that strongly influence how people enjoy the ride. Stop too often and they will grumble. Stop too little and they will grumble. Give some consideration to those riders who suffer with some physical limitation, advanced age (over 30), or may have other experience or equipment limitations (e.g. a smaller gas tank). A general rule of thumb is to stop every thirty to forty minutes for a less experienced group and sixty minutes for the experienced riders regardless of the miles traveled. However, there are no hard and fast rules here so factor in whatever feels right for your group, the route, weather, season, alignment of the planets, whatever. The idea is to enjoy the ride, not just "tolerate" it.

You also need to think about the location of the intermediate stops. All stop locations are not created equal. They should have adequate parking space and at least every other stop should have gas (no more than one hundred miles between gas stops) and restroom facilities available. Use stations with multiple pumps and "pay at the pump" where possible. Common sense will tell you how to cross correlate to the route, mileage vs. duration, for when to schedule these stops.

Try to find interesting or scenic locations that will appeal to your particular group for the other stops. Don't keep stopping at gas stations, mini marts, or roadside rest stops if you have the option. Some additional things to consider are:

- Look for shade if its summer, sun if its winter, quiet if you have just completed a busy highway section, etc.
- Plan stops to avoid gravel and loose dirt. No one likes gravel and it's even less fun in a large group.
- Right hand turns in and out will help keep the group together, and are safer.
- No surprises. Make sure everyone is going to feel welcomed. Call ahead and make reservations or at least tell them that a stop is planned at their location so they won't call out the National Guard when a mass of motorcycles show up unexpectedly. Along these same lines, it's not a bad idea to let local law enforcement know about the ride and maybe drop off a map of the route if one is available.
- Give some thought as to how the group can/should park at these stops. For example, consider if there is enough room to park in the same formation as when traveling down the road or should the group parallel park. The main thing is to get the group quickly and safely off the road so no one gets hit from behind and to be able to reform quickly when it is time to leave.

Remember to always clearly state at the beginning of the ride (pre-ride meeting and/or written on the ride map) where the intermediate stops will be, approximately how long

it should take to get there, how many miles it is from the start or the previous stop, how long you plan to stop, and the approximate departure time if you stay on schedule.

- **ROAD CONDITIONS** - It is obvious you have to consider the condition of the roads you plan to use for your ride. Bouncing along pot holed and uneven pavement, sliding through a long sand or gravel section, tracking through still wet asphalt repairs, or getting delayed and then strung out due to the whims of a flag person, will not get you high marks in the planning category.

What is not so obvious to some is that you should consider the character of the roads in light of who will be going on the ride. Very experienced riders have preferences but can handle just about anything. The less experienced may well be intimidated if you are planning two hundred miles of Interstate or seventy five miles of nonstop fast blind twisty back road turns. Think it through and then make sure you tell everyone what they can expect.

- **TIMING** - Give a lot of consideration to the experience level and personal preferences of the riders you are targeting when setting up the starting and ending time for the ride. Not everyone likes to get up at the crack of dawn and hit the road. Likewise, there are riders who prefer the crack of noon for the ride start. Additionally, no matter what they may tell you, there are many riders who don't have enough saddle time to feel comfortable at night. Carefully describing the timing of the ride will cut down on the misunderstandings and therefore the resulting griping. Adhering to the SCPR scheduled ride times will help alleviate many of these problems. (That does not mean that you can't schedule another time, just make sure everyone knows the change in time.)

- **WEATHER AND SEASONAL CONSIDERATIONS** - This section is all common sense. Don't get offended but do factor in the weather and season for everyone's enjoyment. For example, avoid as much of the middle part of the day as you can when planning a summer ride and use as much of the middle part of the day as you can when planning a winter ride. Take into account rain and fog patterns for your intended route. Maybe check the weather channel before you leave the house. Avoid inadvertently riding into a rising or setting sun if possible unless you are purposely incorporating the effect for a reason. Think about bug season and the possible effect that might have. Consider the expected temperature and the effect that might have on the riders. Consider these when planning your intermediate stops as well as the ride in general.

Something else to consider is whether the ride will be canceled, rescheduled, go as planned or even canceled in the middle of the ride in the event of bad weather. Make sure everyone understands what your definition of bad weather is. Some riders won't leave the garage if it rains two states over while others are prepared to ride through an arctic storm. Let everyone know so no one shows up for a ride that has been canceled or doesn't show up for a ride that is going no matter what.

- **FREQUENCY** - Don't back away from organizing a ride just because there is one planned close to or on the same date you are thinking about. There will always be riders who cannot go or don't want to go on the other ride who will be interested in going on your ride. Don't forget the hard-core group of riders that will ride every day and night if they get the chance. The message is go ahead and set your ride up even if you end up with only a small group. The enjoyment, not the number of riders, is the important thing.
- **WHO IS GOING ON THE RIDE?** - You have two different "who's" you need to deal with at two different times. The first set of "who" is going on the ride are the riders you plan for. For example, you may be planning a ride for fairly experienced riders that will cover a medium distance and be primarily routed through tight curving secondary roads. That is your target and you consider all the previously discussed factors in laying out your plan. Fine so far. However, be aware that you might have a few riders show up the day of the ride who don't match the profile you planned for or are essentially unknown to you (the second set of "who").

There are a few things you need to do when (not if) this happens. The first is to remind/announce to everyone at the pre-ride meeting the particulars of the ride as previously discussed and ask if everyone is comfortable with the plan. You are covered if they still want to go. However, in the interest of safety, you should get riders who you are familiar with to watch out for those unexpected/unknown riders who show up. They should understand that you are asking them to monitor these riders from a safety standpoint and should notify you quietly at any time they suspect someone is getting in over his/her head or is riding in an unsafe manner. This will allow you to take whatever action is appropriate before anyone gets into real trouble. It is much safer for all to have an experienced rider drop back and lead some lesser experienced riders at a reduced pace than it is to have someone crash. Additionally, any embarrassment that might inadvertently result will heal much quicker than broken bones.

Not every rider is comfortable riding behind anything other than another two wheeled motorcycle, especially in turns/twisties. For that reason, trikes and motorcycles pulling trailers should ride at the back of the group(s) just ahead of the Tail Gunner(s).

- **COMMUNICATIONS**

Although not imperative, it is a good idea for the Ride Leader and the Tail Gunner to each have the use of a CB radio, both to transmit and receive. (Channel 1 is the standard channel for all SPCR rides and is fast becoming the standard for most motorcyclist groups using CBs.) Important information can be relayed in minimum time with it's use. It is also a good idea for all Element Leaders (and Group Leaders if applicable) to have CBs. The more the merrier and the better informed the riders remain during the ride. Extraneous transmissions by other riders should be kept to a minimum so as not to block more critical information (e.g. road hazard, wet pavement, etc.) from being passed. If you want to chit-chat go to another channel. Be alert, however, for hand signals if you do go to another channel, turn off your CB,

and with some CBs, override your receiver while talking on the interphone with your passenger.

Every rider should listen closely and be attentive to instructions and information. If you are listening to music, keep the volume low so that you can hear your CB. Situations can develop in seconds that can affect your safety. Use your name or CB handle when communicating, new or infrequent riders may not recognize your voice (e.g. "Leader, this is Bobby R. It looks like your trunk isn't latched.").

Motorcycles without radios should be put in the middle of the group when possible.

*Note:* The best transmissions are made with the CB microphone directly in front of and just "grazing" the lips of the transmitting person regardless of the type of helmet you are wearing (1/2, 3/4, or full face). Even a half inch away from the lips allows road/motorcycle noise to accompany the transmission. When talking, speak slowly and distinctly, and "project" your voice (not yell) as though you are talking to someone ten feet away. If you find you seem to be missing transmissions, check your radio's squelch level (and make sure you're still on the correct CB channel).

If you do not have a CB radio, or when CB radios are not used, it is very important to be well aware of the common hand signals and what they mean, and quickly pass them along so that other riders are made aware of what is being relayed.

## **VII GENERAL COMMENTS**

- **PICTURES** - Always try to have at least two riders bring cameras and enough film to shoot lots of pictures when planning a large ride. These visual reminders accomplish at least two things. First, everyone likes to have a record of a good time, and second, they can help to build interest in future rides among viewers who were not present. Additional uses of these pictures could be for SCPR historical purposes, submission to the local media, etc..

- **CHASE/ SUPPORT VEHICLE** - A big plus for a formal or large group multi-day (or one day ride) is the use of a chase or support vehicle to help with emergencies. This vehicle should be large enough to pull a two motorcycle trailer in the event of serious breakdowns (I know, I know, but a Harley did break down in 1948 and it's better to err on the safe side). This is a real "crowd pleaser" as no one can stand the thought of possibly leaving his/her motorcycle on the side of the road even temporarily, or turning it over to an eighteen year old wrecker driver with a rusted hook.

- Driving the chase vehicle can be an opportunity for someone who would or could not otherwise participate.

- The chase vehicle becomes an excellent additional carrier of the emergency

supplies normally carried by the Ride Leader and/or the Tail Gunner.

- The chase vehicle can easily carry additional emergency supplies such as a can of gas, flat fixing supplies for tubeless tires, a few containers of motor oil, a spare set of gapped spark plugs for various species of motorcycles, a few more tools than are normally carried by each rider, etc.. However, remember that we are talking emergency use only and not a substitute for normal maintenance.
- The chase vehicle becomes a welcome alternative ride should someone become ill on the ride.
- A magnetic sign or banner can be procured for the vehicle to help identify our organization to the local communities and to other riders who are not members. It also lends an air of "credibility" to the group so you're not viewed as just a "bunch" of disorganized riders out to wreak havoc throughout the world.
- The chase vehicle should have a CB and a portable phone for communicating with the riding group and/or emergency agencies.
- The chase vehicle can also be driven by a participating rider with his/her motorcycle on the trailer, "switching out" with other riders every couple of hundred miles. This provides a way to still have a chase vehicle if there is not a "dedicated" chase vehicle driver.

*Good luck and have a great time.*

## **APPENDIX I**

### **Road Rage and Avoiding Trouble**

Experts say that the potential for road rage exists within just about everyone, car drivers, truck drivers, motorcycle drivers. But the fact is that when rage happened, we're much more likely to be the victims in any confrontation with other vehicles.

With that in mind, here are some tips for protecting yourself on the road:

- Don't provoke other drivers. Cutting someone off or blasting your horn used to earn you a middle-finger salute at worst. Now, you could end up playing bumper-tag without a bumper.
- Stay cool. When you run into an aggressive driver, don't respond to provocation. That's almost guaranteed to make a bad situation worse.
- Back off. If someone targets you, try to escape by changing lanes and slowing down. Accelerating can just lead to a high speed chase.
- Don't stop. Many drivers report that aggressive drivers clearly tried to force them to stop alongside the road. Don't do it. This only makes you more vulnerable.
- Change course. Figure that the aggressive driver may have some other reason for being on this road than harassing you. Take the next exit ramp, or turn onto a cross street. If the driver follows you, proceed immediately to someplace where you see people- a gas station or restaurant is good, or, if you know the area, ride directly to the nearest police station.
- Call the police as soon as possible. Sure, the driver may have left you alone, but he or she could be out there harassing someone else.

**APPENDIX II****Packing For Extended Day Rides**

Multi-day trips (a week or more at a time) tests not only the motorcycles' capabilities and endurance, but the riders' and passengers' as well. They present problem areas not usually addressed in single day, return to my warm fuzzy garage at night, type riding. For example, can I really do this?...what do I pack?...how do I pack it?...what do I do if my motorcycle breaks down?...etc., etc..

The following checklist is by no means the definitive word on what to take or do, but it will give you a list of things to think about.

Pack clothes for 1 week (not counting the clothes you start off riding in). Plan on washing clothes once each week. Storage room is at a premium, so, pack LIGHT and TIGHT. Roll clothes, don't fold them. Vacuum bags can also be a great help.

**Clothes (per person):**

- Shorts (1)
- T-shirts (5) Plan on buying a couple
- Long sleeve shirt (1)
- Leather or denim jacket (1)
- Sweatshirt (1)
- Underwear (6)
- Socks (6)
- Gloves, light weight (1), winter (1)
- Sneakers or topsiders (1)
- Gator (1) and neckerchief (1)
- Dopp kit/ Make-up kit/ medicines
- Belt (1)
- Chaps and vest

**Rain Gear (per person):**

- Rainsuit (1)
- Rain booties (1)
- Rain gloves (1)

**Motorcycle:**

- Extra set of keys (1)
- Bike cover (1)
- Road maps and map marker (1)
- Cleaning rags (4)
- S100/all purpose cleaner (1)
- Motor oil (1 qt)
- Spark Plug (pre-gapped) (1)
- Lock/ chain/ cable (1)

- Bungies (4) or cargo nets (2)
- Tool kit (1)
- Tire repair kit (1)
- Flashlight
- First aid kit (1)
- Garbage bags, lg. (3)
- Plastic zip bags, lg. (4)

**Miscellaneous Items:**

- Sunglasses (1)
- Sunscreen (1)
- Book/ reading material (1)
- Camera (3 disposable)
- Wallet
- Cell phone and charger
- Money/ ATM card/ check book
- Camelback or water bottle
- Small foldup umbrella

**Miscellaneous Arrangements:**

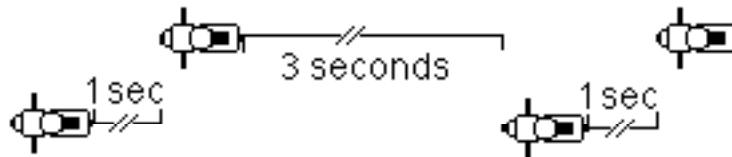
- AAA type insurance coverage (just in case)
- Stop newspaper
- Take care of mail
- Make animal arrangements
- Water plants
- Disconnect garage door openers
- Clean pool filters
- Set a/c's to 85 degrees
- Turn off coffee pot/ etc.

## APPENDIX III

### SCPR Ride Briefing Items

- New riders and guests – need a waiver signed
- Ride Leader and Tail Gunner
- Destination and general routing
- Duration of ride/ segments/ intermediate stops
- Length of ride (miles)
- Type of roads to expect (e.g. interstate/twisties)
- Spacing: 3sec/ 1sec (see below)
- Stay in lane selected by leader (except for safety or when passing)
- Obey ALL traffic and speed laws
- Be considerate to other vehicles/ drivers
- Ride smart, ride safely, and have fun

### SCPR Motorcycle Spacing



The 3 and 1 second timing will provide a safe distance between motorcycles and elements regardless of speed (the faster you go the more distance the 3 and 1 second spacing provides).