

Team Riding

The fun and riding pleasure that we get as a group is an important part of the Blue Knights membership. When we ride as a group the most important part of the ride is that we all get home safely. Let's face it, motorcycling is dangerous so why not eliminate as many of the risk variables as we can?

In order to survive on the open road on a motorcycle one must adopt riding techniques and form riding habits that are thought of as being "defensive". When we ride in a group our actions not only affect you, but also affect everyone riding in the group. The most important thing to remember when riding together we ride as a "Team" effort. In order to be safe we must rely on the cooperation of all the riders in the group.

Planning a Team Ride

"Any project that is done well is always planned well". The same applies to a team ride. A good team ride is planned well from the very beginning. All participants should be aware of where they are going and how to get home from there.

- Choose a destination and the routes to and from.
- If possible prepare a map for each rider in the group.
- If more than five to seven riders are involved, break the group into Teams with Lead and Drag Captains.
- Discuss and agree on the speed that the Team will travel at.
- Plan the Pit Stops for Bio Breaks, Photo Ops, Meals, and other breaks, and consider the parking requirements in advance./
- Consider each bike size and determine fuel requirements keeping in mind the smallest bike in the group.

Before The Ride Begins

1. Every rider should be starting the ride with a full fuel tank and an empty bladder. Fuel stops should be planned to allow for some margin of safety and comfort for the bikes with the least capacity and touring range.
2. Everyone, before they arrive for the ride, should have taken a few minutes to check their machines to ensure they are safe and operating properly.
3. Everyone should carry essential tools, any spares that could be required, and a First Aid Kit. Also, rain gear, water, and if necessary warmer riding gear.
4. Everyone should take the Group Riding Hand Signals home with them and memorize them. We don't always have C.B.'s to use.
5. Everyone should take a few minutes prior to departure to study the route map. Ask questions if anything is unclear.
6. Know the ride schedule, be on time, fuelled, and ready to go.

Team Riding Techniques and Procedures

Any group ride with more than five to seven motorcycles may have a negative impact on safety and flow. Consequently, to have a safe ride, we should break up into manageable Teams. Each Team rides apart from the other Teams in the group. This allows for better assimilation of the group(s) into the flow of traffic. Have you ever tried to pass a mass of 25 motorcycles on the highway? Teams of five to seven riders are more easily dealt with by motorists.

Team Management

Each Team should have a Team Lead and a Team Drag. The Lead rides at the front of the formation and the Drag at the rear. If possible, both should be equipped with C.B. radios. Their responsibility is to maneuver the Team safely, in formation, through traffic as a team. The team Lead and the Team Drag have mutual responsibility for the Teams safety.

A Good Team Member

1. Assumes responsibility to ride and work with the Team and the other Team members for the safety and protection of the entire Team, and especially in traffic.
2. Maintains a steady speed and tries to eliminate Yo-yoing or straggling. Either of these disrupts the rhythm and flow of the ride and destroys the purpose of riding as a group.
3. Stays alert and announces to the Team any obstacle, condition, or potential situation that could be hazardous to the Team. Remember that sometimes the lives of others on the Team are in your hands.
4. Will maintain a safe riding distance to prevent HOLES in the formation that would invite aggressive motorists to cut into the formation.

(Remember) Pace yourself, one second stagger and two seconds behind the bike directly in front of you. During darkness and inclement weather these times should be doubled.

Team Separation

Each Team on the highway should be separated by no less than 200 yards, preferably 400 yards. This allows sufficient space for other motorists to pass the Teams.

Formation

Each Team travels in a staggered formation within a single vehicle lane. The Lead Captain rides in front in the left track of the lane. The next rider rides in the right track of the same lane, and so on until all bikes are positioned.

Solo Riders

Anyone not wishing to ride with the Team should ride at a safe distance from the Teams and meet at the acknowledged destination or first break point.

Entering Traffic

When entering traffic from a parking lot or rest area the Drag Captain moves slowly into the traffic first, staying approximately in the centre of the lane, thus allowing the Lead Captain and the other Team members opportunity to safely pull out ahead of the Drag Captain. This must be accomplished with common sense and caution obviously. However, if well done, it keeps the Team together. Each Team member should be ready to move out quickly and assume their riding position within the group.

Overtaking Traffic

When passing a vehicle on a two lane highway, each member should pass SINGLE FILE, and in order. The Lead Captain will make the first decision to pass and will notify all Team members by C.B. or hand signals to assume a single file formation. The Drag Captain will move to the centre of the lane to block any traffic following from moving up to the right side of the single file formation. The Lead captain, after passing, should accelerate far enough ahead to make room for the rest of the Team to re-form in the normal staggered configuration. Single file formation before passing allows each rider maximum maneuverability and visibility to assess approaching traffic. Using the C.B., the Drag Captain advises the Lead Captain when the entire Team has passed.

For Team riding purposes traffic lanes on multi lane highways are numbered from left to right. The number one lane is the extreme left lane closest to the median or the closest oncoming traffic. The lane to the right of it is Lane Number 2 and so on.

Lane Changes In Light Traffic

Lane changes on highways with two or more lanes going in the same direction should be done as a unit. Using the CB or hand signals the Lead Captain notifies the Drag Captain of the need to move the Team to another lane and the number of the lane to be moved to. Only the Drag

should acknowledge this transmission. In light traffic the Drag will announce that the lane is SECURE to make the lane change. It is NOT SECURE if any traffic exists between the Lead and the Drag. Riders without C.B.'s should be alert and observe the hand signals of other Team members.

Each Team member, after checking traffic to confirm that the lane is secure, moves into the new lane as a UNIT.

Lane Changes In Heavy Traffic

A lane change in heavy traffic takes place after the Drag says it is safe to do so. At that point the Team makes a check and each rider in succession FROM REAR TO FRONT, will transition to the new lane. The Lead Captain is the last to move into the new lane thereby maintaining the integrity of the Team. This will protect the Team when in heavy traffic conditions where vehicle could break up or endanger the formation.

Stopping At Traffic Lights And Stop Signs

When stopping as a unit at traffic signals all Team members should assume a position of ALMOST two abreast. Each rider should have slight space advantage of the staggered formation. This position will keep the Team as COMPRESSED as possible. While waiting, each rider should position himself directly behind the bike in front of them.

When leaving the COMPRESSED formation the #2 bike, which is stopped slightly behind and to the right of the Lead Captain will move only after the Lead captain had traveled far enough forward so that any sideway movement will not result in a collision. The other Team members start in turn in the same fashion with the Drag Captain leaving last. The Team Captain should accelerate at a rate that allows Team to regroup as soon as possible. The Drag informs the Lead when all bikes are through the intersection and the Team has re-formed again. No rider should accelerate past another member as this can result in a dangerous situation.

Turning At An Intersection

Each Team member will stay in the arc of the turn in their respective lane position unless the Lead Captain has called for a single file formation.

Narrowing Highway

When approaching a construction zone or bridge or any other narrow portion of the highway, the Lead Captain will announce 'SINGLE FILE' on the C.B. in addition to using the hand signal. All bikes in the group, after individually signaling to the riders behind, transition to the single file formation.

Hills

If a hill is encountered where sight lines become hindered to the point of being a safety concern, the Lead will give a C.B. and hand signal for single file. Starting with the Lead Captain, each rider will transition to the centre of the lane so the entire group can see oncoming traffic. The Lead will then give the group the signal to re-form in the staggered formation.

Curves

When the team enters a curve, the entire team transitions to a single file formation for the following reasons:

1. Increased visibility through the turn.
2. Provide a safe area to the right of the oncoming vehicles which may stray across the center line of the road.
3. Most debris is located along the outside edge of the roadway.

Obstacles

Any team member who sees a pothole or obstacle in his path should signal the rider behind and take actions to move to the other track in the lane. This will allow others coming behind a clearer view of the obstruction and time to take evasive action.

Change OF Speed

When it becomes necessary to slow or accelerate the Team's speed the Team Lead will call for, and give, the appropriate hand signal. Each team member should pass this signal on to the rider behind.

Parked Cars

When entering a town where cars are parked along the side of the street, the Lead Captain may call for Single File. The Team should transition to the left track in the respective lane. Be alert for children, or toys, or animals entering the lane from between parked cars.

Also, watch for vehicle tail lights, front wheels of parked vehicles, or car doors opening to assess driver's actions in advance.

Entering A Parking Lot

Upon entering a parking lot the Team should assume a Single File formation. If necessary, the Team captain should loop the parking lot to seek a spot large enough for the entire Team to park together. All bikes should remain at the entrance until the Lead Captain finds space for everyone. If the Lead Captains cannot find space suitable for everyone then each rider will find their own parking space individually.

Being Informed

Team members can never be too informed. Team Captains should always keep their teams informed about destinations, routes, possible problems, and any changes in plans, etc.

C.B. Radios

Since we are all used to using radios in the execution of our duties it goes without saying that this is a very useful tool and should be respected as such. Any idle chit chat should be avoided while on any group ride. Bikes without C.B.'s should be placed in the middle of each Team. The Lead Captain should brief all riders on the hand signals that will be used prior to each ride.

Emergencies

Should an emergency occur, consider all options and priorities.

- First, treat the injured. (This is why we should carry a First Aid Kit)
- Attempt to contact help, by C.B., cell phone, or sending someone.
- Stay with the injured.
- If there are no injuries, try to clear the roadway.
- Monitor oncoming traffic to prevent further problems.
- If someone falls ill, cannot continue on the ride, or disappears from the formation, the Drag will stop with the bike and/or rider in trouble and communicate with the Lead Captain. The Lead Captain will continue to a safe location to stop and assess the problem.

When traveling through towns the group may become broken up at traffic lights. The LEAD may pull over to wait, if an area is available. If not, he will continue at a reduced rate of speed and keep in touch with the stragglers, letting them know where he is. This is especially important if there is a turn to be made before the Team gets back together.

Consideration

An important part of any group ride is consideration. Have consideration for all members of all groups. Always give consideration to other vehicles using the roadway. But most important have consideration for your own safety, the team, and the group. Consider your own capabilities, skill level, health, physical stamina, and feelings. NEVER ride beyond YOUR COMFORT LEVEL!