

South Florida Riders Club: Guidelines for Group Riding with the SFRC

Leader, Tail Gunner & Rider Responsibilities



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Guidelines for Group Riding with the SFRC

A. Pairing up Groups

1. The President will determine how many bikes are there and how many groups are needed. If the President is not present then any executive officer or the Road Captain will gather up the groups.
2. Groups should be small, odd numbers work well 5-7 so that the tail gunner is in the same path as the lead bike which enables him to see the leader.
3. When appointing group leaders and tail gunners, it is suggested that the Road Captain is the leader and the Safety Officer is the tail. However the Safety Officer can ride in any group or behind all the groups to have the opportunity to observe the groups for possible riding problems that may need to be discussed later.
4. Determine who is experienced in group riding and who is not. Beginners and new members should be placed up front and ride 2nd in the group with no more than two inexperienced riders in each group.
5. Each leader and tail will have a CB for communication. A GPS is a good thing to have but not a necessity as everyone has a route sheet.

B. Group Leader Responsibilities

1. **Pacing the group** - The leader sets the speed of travel; the speed should be within the limits of the riders in your group.
2. **Speeding** - It is suggested you follow the posted speed limits; you may need to make exceptions for inexperienced riders. Typically we travel no more than 5-7 miles over the speed limit. As stated above, the leader of your group will set the group's pace.
3. **When to go and when to stop at a traffic light** - Sometimes as a leader this will be a tough decision. Often times it's determined by the leader and his abilities to stop the group all together or look both ways and proceed through the light. At times part of the group will stop to avoid running a red light. The tail gunner will notify the leader as to their position. At this time the leader will slow the pace down or decide to pull over to await the part of the group left at the light.

4. **Lane changes** - The leader of each group will make the decision to change lanes. He will call to his tail gunner and ask for a lane.
5. **“All Clear”** - This is something the leaders might say after proceeding through an intersection to let the group know its all clear. We encourage leaders **not** to use the “All Clear” as each rider needs to look for themselves and gage when he feels it’s safe to proceed through the intersection and not just follow the rider in front of him.
6. **Lane control**
 - a. **Left lane vs. middle vs. right lane** – Choosing lanes is the leader’s decision. Some leaders feel more comfortable in different lanes due to traffic conditions, speed of traffic, and road condition; therefore, it’s up to each leader as to which lane to lead his group.
 - b. **Following the group ahead** – Each group leader should maintain the lane that is best for his group. It is suggested that all groups should stay in one lane as to not fill the other lanes of travel causing a rolling road block. It is important that each group leader allow enough spacing between groups for cars to enter and exit the lane.
 - c. **Pulling into traffic** - When making turns onto roads or making u-turns please leave enough room for your entire group, if needed wait for the light or until the road is clear for all. Think of it as a truck with a trailer, the leader is the truck and his group is the trailer. The truck needs enough space to make all turns safely with his trailer.
 - d. **Passing on a two lane road** - When it is safe, the leader will give the passing hand signal and announce on the CB that his group is passing. The leader should pass and stay at an increased speed until there is enough room for the entire group to pass the vehicle safely. Everyone needs to look for themselves and pass on their own. Every rider is responsible for passing safely as an individual, once the group is all around the tail gunner will let the leader know that his group is all around.

C. Tail Gunner

1. **How to secure a lane for lane change** - Once the leader calls for a lane change the tail gunner should check his mirrors and look (turn your head) to make sure the lane is clear, at this time he can move over and let the leader know that the lane is clear. Sometimes it’s necessary to move over and hold a lane for the group, once the lane is clear let the leader know. The tail gunner could say something like “the lane is clear after the blue car” or “the lane is clear after the blue Camry passes you”.
2. **Watch for unsafe conditions** – The tail gunner should be aware of traffic ahead and fast approaching cars from the rear. If traffic is being held up by the group, he should make the leader aware. Passing vehicles should be announced, “a red Ford truck passing on the left”

3. **Communication with Group Leader** - Communicate with your leader by CB or at rest stops, keep him informed to what's happening within your group.
4. **Responsibility to assist a disabled bike** - In the event of a motorcycle having a mechanical issue it is the tail gunner's responsibility to stop and try to help and assist the rider, try to let the leader know what measures are being taking to resolve the issues, while the rest of the group proceeds to the next scheduled stop. We should all have the phone numbers of the leaders or Road Captain and the Safety Officer in our phone to be able to make a call in this event.

D. CB Etiquette

1. **Proper language between leader & tail gunner** – Speak clearly on the CB and refrain from words like “NO” or “GO” as they sound the same. Use phrases like “group one, the lane is clear”. Call leaders or tail gunners by name “Jim the left Lane is clear for group one”. Always remember to hold you CB talk button down for at least two or three seconds before talking; this way you have cleared the channel and can begin to talk without cutting off the first one or two words of you sentence.
 - a. Before & after lane change, riders should listen to the whole CB transmission before moving. Example “the left lane is clear **after the red car**”
 - b. Before & after merge or right on red, announce that the right lane merges ahead or the right lanes ending.
 - c. The tail gunner should be announced that the group is all around “group two is all together or all around”
2. **Proper timing** – For Example, wait for tail gunner to respond to leader before next leader requests a change. Please let each group finish their move before announcing you need a lane change. If you're talking on the CB the group that first made a request for a lane change cannot communicate and safely make the lane changes they need. One by one, group one group two and so on. We don't need to move all at one time.
3. **Changing channel for casual conversation** - The CB should be used for the leader and tail gunners to communicate instructions and/or problems along the route. You should remind everyone to keep the “chit chat “to a minimum. You can change the channel if you want to have a conversation with another rider; however, it is important for you to change it back to keep up with what's happening with your group.

E. Leader & Tail Gunner Responsibility

1. **Speak to individual riders regarding safety issues** – The leader and tail gunner should make every effort to resolve safety issues within their own group. This can be done effectively by your tone of voice and demeanor. Calmly speak to the individual as an adult. If safety issues cannot be resolved within the group then involve the Safety Officer. If the Safety Officer is not present then any executive officer present (president, VP, Treasurer and Secretary) shall function as ride Safety Officer. If no executive officer is present then the Road Captain shall function as the Safety Officer.
2. **Work together to keep group in a uniform formation while ensuring proper following distance** - Use standard formation with the two second rule. The lead bike starts in the left hand position of the lane. The second bike lines up in the right hand position of the lane, one second behind the leader. The third bike lines up in the left hand position on the lane two seconds behind the leader, and so on. If you are not sure on the proper distance, find a line in the road and as the bike in front of you rolls over it start to count, One second or two seconds; (depending on your position in the formation), you should be at the same spot in the road. This distance will change as speeds increase and decrease.

F. Rider Responsibility

1. **Read and understand SFRC Rules of Group Riding**- They on the web site.
2. **Control rubber banding** - Ask fellow riders to keep up, remind them of the two second rule, if necessary let the safety office know.
3. **Stay in lane while cornering (do not cross center line)** - Stay focused and turn properly and avoid crossing the center lines. Be aware of your surroundings and do not just follow the guy in front of you. Look where you want to go. In curves watch for posted speed limits when entering curves, the faster you go the more lean you will need to turn the bike. Remember you are ultimately responsible for your own safety, so ride your own ride.
4. **Ride in a group with similar riding skills** - Some groups ride faster than others, some ride different than others, (tighter group, more relaxed, maybe by age or friends riding together) find the group the matches you riding skills. Or simply start your own group tailored to how you like to ride.
5. **Change lanes properly. Follow the leader.** – The group does not move until the tail advises the leader that the lane is secure and clear to move the group. The lane change is complete from front to rear. The group does not move before the leader has time to secure the lane.

G. Toll roads/ bridges

1. The Road Captain should be aware of any toll roads/bridges and tell all riders in advance.
2. Most people in the group are using a SunPass; they will stay as a group through the SunPass lane. If a rider does not have a SunPass they will leave the group, pay their toll and regain their position with the group. The leader of each group needs to be aware of any riders having to pay toll separate from the group and will slow the pace down until the rider catches up.
3. If there are tolls without SunPass, then each group leader will collect money from the riders in advance before arriving at the toll booth, the group leader pays for all bikes in his group, and the bikes proceed through the toll booth.

H. Emergencies

1. **Who should stop** - Leader or tail gunner, President, Safety Officer and or Road Capt. The whole group does not need to stop. Ten bikes on the side of the road it not safe.
2. **What to do for a damaged bike** - Call a tow truck, use AAA or any other services a rider or member might have. A member could volunteer the use of a trailer or truck, (if close enough to area). Notify husband or wife and explain issues with bike.
3. **What to do for a rider involved in an accident with injuries**- Remain calm, call 911 for ambulance / EMT. Do not try to move rider or remove any protective gear, help with traffic control. Call spouse to inform them of rider's conditions.

QUICK TIPS: MSF's Guide to Group Riding

Motorcycling is primarily a solo activity, but for many, riding as a group -- whether with friends on a Sunday morning ride or with an organized motorcycle rally -- is the epitome of the motorcycling experience. Here are some tips to help ensure a fun and safe group ride:

Arrive prepared. Arrive on time with a full gas tank.

Hold a riders' meeting. Discuss things like the route, rest and fuel stops, and hand signals (see diagrams on next page). Assign a lead and sweep (tail) rider. Both should be experienced riders who are well-versed in group riding procedures. The leader should assess everyone's riding skills and the group's riding style.

Keep the group to a manageable size, ideally five to seven riders. If necessary, break the group into smaller sub-groups, each with a lead and sweep rider.

Ride prepared. At least one rider in each group should pack a cell phone, first-aid kit, and full tool kit, so the group is prepared for any problem that they might encounter.

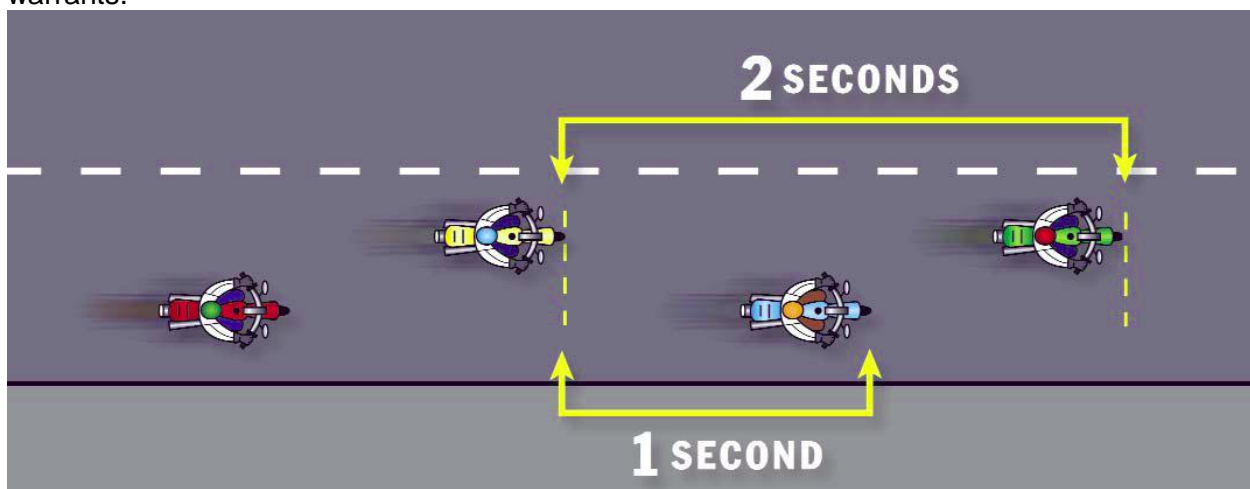
Ride in formation. The staggered riding formation (see diagram below) allows a proper space cushion between motorcycles so that each rider has enough time and space to maneuver and to react to hazards. The leader rides in the left third of the lane, while the next rider stays at least one second behind in the right third of the lane; the rest of the group follows the same pattern. A single-file formation is preferred on a curvy road, under conditions of poor visibility or poor road surfaces, entering/leaving highways, or other situations where an increased space cushion or maneuvering room is needed.

Avoid side-by-side formations, as they reduce the space cushion. If you suddenly needed to swerve to avoid a hazard, you would not have room to do so. You don't want handlebars to get entangled.














Periodically check the riders following in your rear view mirror. If you see a rider falling behind, slow down so they may catch up. If all the riders in the group use this technique, the group should be able to maintain a fairly steady speed without pressure to ride too fast to catch up.

If you're separated from the group, don't panic. Your group should have a pre-planned procedure in place to regroup. Don't break the law or ride beyond your skills to catch up.

For mechanical or medical problems, use a cell phone to call for assistance as the situation warrants.



MSF's Guide to Group Riding: Hand Signals

<p>Stop - arm extended straight down, palm facing back</p> 	<p>Single File - arm and index finger extended straight up</p> 	<p>Turn Signal On - open and close hand with fingers and thumb extended</p> 
<p>Slow Down - arm extended straight out, palm facing down</p> 	<p>Double File - arm with index and middle finger extended straight up</p> 	<p>Fuel - arm out to side pointing to tank with finger extended</p> 
<p>Speed Up - arm extended straight out, palm facing up</p> 	<p>Hazard in Roadway - on the right, point with right foot; on the left, point with left hand</p> 	<p>Refreshment Stop - fingers closed, thumb to mouth</p> 
<p>You Lead/Come - arm extended upward 45 degrees, palm forward pointing with index finger, swing in arc from back to front</p> 	<p>Highbeam - tap on top of helmet with open palm down</p> 	<p>Comfort Stop - forearm extended, fist clenched with short up and down motion</p> 
<p>Follow Me - arm extended straight up from shoulder, palm forward</p> 	<p>Pull Off - arm positioned as for right turn, forearm swung toward shoulder</p> 