

Gainesville H.O.G. Chapter

Gainesville, Florida

Chapter # 0675



GROUP RIDING HANDBOOK

February 2009

GAINESVILLE H.O.G. CHAPTER #0675 GROUP RIDING HANDBOOK

All members should be familiar with the information in this guide so we can enjoy the adventures of the road together safely.

This handbook is intended to be a guide, nothing more. Riders should be aware and prepared for every possible situation and ready to respond appropriately. Riders must be, **AWARE, ALERT** and **VIGILANT** at all times. Our goal is to be safe, ride and have fun.

DISCLAIMER:

EVERY EFFORT HAS BEEN MADE TO ENSURE THE INFORMATION CONTAINED WITHIN THIS HANDBOOK IS CURRENT AND ACCURATE. HOWEVER, NEITHER THE GAINESVILLE H.O.G. CHAPTER, GAINESVILLE HARLEY- DAVIDSON, NOR THE HARLEY-DAVIDSON MOTOR COMPANY MAKE ANY CLAIMS AS TO THE ACCURACY OF THE INFORMATION PUBLISHED.

SAFETY:

Gainesville HOG Chapter has adopted the following basic policy for group rides: **Ride Safe, Be Courteous, use Common Sense and Have Fun.** The ultimate responsibility for safety on each ride belongs to the individual member/rider. Safety and the use of common sense are paramount.

THE SIMPLE STUFF:

Show up for rides at least fifteen minutes before the pre-ride briefing so you do not miss important information or keep other riders waiting. Have your gas tank full and your bladder empty. Check your bike thoroughly beforehand. Proper maintenance is a pre-requisite for a day of safe riding. Check your oil and tire pressure before you leave home. Have what you will need for the ride (with you): water, proper clothing, etc. There's nothing more uncomfortable than being a long way from home (without proper clothing) and experiencing a major weather change.

PRE-RIDE BRIEFING:

Immediately prior to departure, the Ride Leader will give a pre-ride briefing to go over the ride route and review group riding communications (signals) and safety topics. Be patient and give your full attention. Group riding communications and safety topics must be covered at the beginning of each group ride. This may not be your first group ride, but, it could be the first group ride for the person riding in front of you.

This pre-ride briefing is for safety. Ask questions, if necessary, and make certain you have all the information you need regarding the ride. This is also a good time to inform Road Captains what they need to know about you and your riding limitations. They will be happy to accommodate any special condition they can, e.g. if you prefer to ride up front or in the rear of the group.

KEY GROUP RIDE PERSONNEL:

Head Road Captain: Responsible for ride organization and training the Road Captain staff.

Safety Officer: Promotes safety and supports the Road Captains.

Road Captains: Assist Head Road Captain and answer questions from riders.

Ride Leader: A Ride Leader rides at the front of the group and is in charge of leading the ride.

Mid-Pack Road Captain: According to size of group, this Road Captain(s) will ride in the middle and assist when/where needed.

Sweep Road Captain(s): Will also be positioned at the back of the group. Known as “the Sweep,” (or tail gunner) they will watch over the group and provide assistance to any rider that may require help.

NEW RIDERS AND RIDERS WITH SPEED RESTRICTIONS

Rides will be conducted to the level of the rider with the greatest limitations. Meaning, we will try to ride no faster than necessary to support inexperienced riders, or mechanical limitations like the –mph break-in limitation on a new bike. If the situation dictates, a special ride group may be formed for the limited rider or riders. New riders and new bikes should ride behind the Ride Leader. The reasons are: The closer to the front, the slower you ride. You are less likely to be separated from the ride leader by traffic at a stoplight. The Ride Leader can more easily adjust the pace of the group to match the riders easily seen immediate behind. Ride pace is limited to match break-in speed for new motorcycles.

FORMATION RIDING

Staggered: The standard group riding formation will be the staggered formation. The Ride Leader always leads the group from the left. The hand signal for staggered formation is the left hand raised in the two-finger victory sign and the wrist rotated back and forth on a vertical axis.

Single File: It is often desirable to ride single file because of narrow or curvy roads, obstacles, or other hazards. The hand signal is the left hand raised with the index finger pointing up.

Positioning: The staggered formation increases the distance from the rider in front, yet, maintains a compact group. Give yourself enough room to stop in an emergency, but do not give unnecessary space and cause the group to be drawn out or lengthened. Remember, you or the riders on the other side of the lane may need to change lane sides in an emergency. You should follow the two (2) second rule: 2 seconds between you and the rider directly in front of you and 1 second between you and the rider diagonal from you.

Safety: Formation group riding is intended to promote safety by increasing our visibility to automobile drivers. It is not intended to be mandatory if a situation dictates otherwise. Staggered formation, single file adjustments, or emergency evasive action should take place safety and whenever warranted; this remains the rider’s individual responsibility. Safety remains the prevailing factor for all rides. Formation adjustments may be warranted and necessary before a Ride Leader demonstrates such a signal. For example, narrow or winding sections of the road

may require a change from staggered to single file. Be alert. Be aware of those around you and, above all, be safe.

STANDARD MANEUVERS

Changing Lanes: When the Ride Leader wants to change lanes, the standard hand signal and turn signal will be given. Then the riders switch smoothly into the new lane. Riders are to look

Stop Signs and Stop Lights: It is normal for bikes coming to a stop signal to pull up next to each other, two by two, and to take off together and re-establish the formation. Obey traffic laws.

Filling the Gap. If a rider drops out of a staggered formation and the ride is not going to stop, it is desirable to preserve the integrity of the formation by filling the gap. Each rider in the line, behind the gap, shall switch to the open spot. Always check your mirrors to ensure there is sufficient room in the formation to complete the maneuver.

Passing: Pass quickly, but safely. If possible, Ride Leaders will complete the pass far enough beyond the vehicle being passed to provide sufficient room for the entire group to pass. Otherwise, riders will pass on an independent basis. Remember, there are riders behind you.

HIGH ALERT AREAS

Intersections: Intersections are one of the more dangerous areas as traffic may come from many different directions including from behind. Red light provides no physical barrier to traffic. Be aware – be alert.

Merging onto Interstate Highways: Merging onto freeways requires alertness and good judgment. The Ride Leader will try to facilitate the merge as a group. Though merging as a group may not always be possible, you should merge safely and, if split from the group, reconnect safely and as traffic conditions allow.

Turns: The Ride Leader will signal turns using standard hand and turn signals. Duplicate the signal and pass it back.

Parked Cars: Group rides will usually stay away from the curb lane if there are parked cars. The reason is to avoid suddenly opened car doors, and people and/or animals darting out from between parked cars.

Passing Large Trucks: BE SEEN. Assume you are not easily seen and you will probably be correct. Depending upon traffic conditions, the Ride Leader may give the single file signal. Everyone should move to the opposite side of the lane away from the truck. It is a general rule that if you cannot see the truck driver's face in his rear-view mirror, he cannot see you.

Road hazards: If you see a hazard such as a pothole, rock, tire tread, or gravel, point to it so that the rider behind you sees the problem also. Point with your HAND OR FOOT.

Traffic: Automobiles will sometimes want to merge into the group. They will not like it there and will usually go away the first chance they get. Let them in, and let them out.

SO NOW YOU'RE A RIDE LEADER (OF A SPLIT GROUP): Stoplights and traffic conditions will often break up the group. You may even find that you become the leader of a

split group from the original group. Carry on just as you have been. The Ride Leader should realize the break has occurred and slow down, if necessary and when safe, to let the split group catch up. If necessary and when safe to do so, a Road Captain in your new group will pull up and take over. In any case, split groups should continue on to the next destination or planned stop.

NEED TO DROP BACK OR STOP?

A rider may need to drop out of their position in the group and take up a position in front of the Sweep so they can adjust for their special needs such as needing more space or a slower speed or the rider may need to stop. Whatever the need, the procedure must be done safely. There are three methods for moving out of the group. If on a multi-lane road, the rider signals to change lanes, does so, then waves the other riders to pass. The rider keeps to their side of the lane and waves the other riders to pass. If a rider has a serious need to drop back or stop, the rider signals the riders behind for more space and pulls off the road when it can be done safely. Immediately wave other riders to pass. The Sweep will stay with the last rider to either ride with them or provide assistance if necessary.

COMMUNICATION (HAND SIGNALS)

Riders often wish to pass information to riders behind them. This is especially true for the Ride Leader. Hand signals are used for this purpose. Be alert and watch for these signals. When you see one, pass it back. Passengers can help with this.

Hand signals include:

Right turn – standard hand signal and turn signal

Left turn – standard hand signal and turn signal

Slow down – left arm outstretched and downward, hand flat, palm down. Raise and lower hand

Stop – left arm outstretched and downward, hand flat, and fingers pointed down.

Single file – hand raised (like fist) with index finger pointed upward

Stagger – hand raised (like fist) with two-fingered “victory” sign. Rotate at wrist.

Follow me – standard “follow me” signal

Need fuel – point to gas tank

Need food or drink – point to mouth

Hazard on left/right – point with foot or hand to hazard. Foot pointing is preferred.

Pull off road to right – use proper signals, see note above.

FORMING UP TO DEPART

This is an unceremonious activity. When the Ride Leader says it is time to leave, everyone should line up behind him/her two by two. Get behind the Ride Leader if you need to be in the front of the group. Don't be bashful about telling someone that you need to position yourself in front. They will understand.

PARKING

Plan ahead so any pushing will be downhill, coming or going. Try to do so in the formation you arrived in.

RIDE YOUR OWN RIDE LEVEL

Never ride above your personal comfort level. Advise the Ride Leader during the pre-ride briefing of any issues or concerns that you may have. If, during the ride, you feel pressured or uncomfortable, pull out of the group and take up a position in front of the Sweep. The Sweep will ride at your comfort level and appreciate your good judgment in taking positive action. If the two of you lose the group, someone else will assume the Sweep duties of the first group. Although you are part of a group, you are also an individual and the sole operator of your bike. **“Ride your own ride”** is the term used to emphasize that you must take responsibility for your riding.

Once the ride group arrives at its intended destination, the HOG ride is officially over. However, members may elect to reassemble for the return trip.

PRE-RIDE CHECKS

Riders need to take some simple actions prior to the ride to ensure their motorcycle is ready for the road. Check your machine's general condition, critical components and fluid levels prior to every ride to help ensure a safe ride. The T-CLOCK checklist covers the exact items to check. The letters T-CLOCK stand for Tires & Wheels, Cables & Controls, Lights, Oil & Fluids, Chain & Chassis, and Kickstand (Sidestand).

Be Safe

Be Alert

Be Aware

Be Courteous

Use Common Sense

HAVE FUN, RIDE YOUR OWN RIDE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!