

HOG93 Group Riding & Leadership (Best Practices)

Road Captains (the ride team)

The Road Captain is responsible for choosing the route, destination and the ride leadership team for H.O.G. #93 group rides. While planning, the road captain should consider if the ride route can be completed safely for every rider and that it can be completed in a timely manner for any size group. The ride leader should plan ahead for each ride (pre-ride if possible) and communicate with the other road captains on the ride as to the route chosen. Topics covered should be all planned stops and any contingency plans, should there be any unforeseen delays or construction that may force a change in the route. While on the ride, the leader should also engage with members at stops and at the destination to ensure members and guests are enjoying the ride and the pace that has been set; this is an opportunity to gauge the success of your rides.

Road Captain Stations in the Group Ride

- Lead
- Alternate Lead
- Sweep
- Alternate Sweep

RC Station Responsibilities

- **Lead:** With the support of your ride team members, the Lead rider is responsible for setting the pace of the ride, getting member riders safely to each stop and then on to the final destination. The Lead rider should work with all ride team members frequently to ensure they are comfortable and familiar with each individual's leadership and riding style.
- **Alternate Lead:** The Alternate Lead is responsible for assisting the ride Leader in any way they can; by taking the lead if requested (should the Lead need to drop out) and by taking a sweep position if the back of the group and the sweeps are separated for a significant amount of time; or if they will not likely catch back up with the group before the next stop.
- **Sweep:** The sweep takes up the rear-most position in the ride group and is responsible for any lane capture that is needed to get the group safely into another lane. The sweep will also be in the best position to stop with another rider who has to drop out of the group due to mechanical troubles or illness. **Note:** In cases where the sweep must drop out with a rider, they should plan to stay with them until resolution, unless that rider releases them to continue on with the rest of the group. Example: the rider has dropped out to make a call or needs to leave the ride.
- **Sweep Alternate:** This position is responsible for taking the lead of a fractured group, and taking over for a Sweep that has had to drop out. Both Sweeps are also responsible for assisting the ride group with exiting from stops and getting safely back underway.

Ride Leadership Best Practices

- **The safety briefing:** The ride leader for each ride must always give the briefing; even if all of the riders are familiar with the group riding rules. Keep it short and sweet. Cover your route first, introduce your RC team then go over the signals most frequently used by the group. Be sure to mention ride formation and spacing, and mention our alcohol policy. Remind the group that each rider is responsible for their own safety (our ride leaders/road captains can only lead and follow, not control each bike in the column). Finally, make sure everyone has signed the necessary forms (Ride sign-in sheet, Guest Waiver).
- **During the ride:** The lead rider is responsible for setting the pace of the ride and should always remain focused, adhering to the planned route and looking 12 seconds ahead for danger. Always remember, the group behind will respond slower to any danger than those in the lead.
- **Consistent group rides:** Ride leaders should always utilize the RC team available to them. Our riders have become accustomed to the RC team formation we have used, so the group can better anticipate the road captain's movements and actions during our rides. If there are not enough road captains on your ride, you can choose a member that has ridden with the group frequently and ask them to fill an empty position. Give them a brief explanation of their role, and verify they are comfortable performing the task. This is especially important for the sweep positions (you can do without an alternate lead if you absolutely must, but having a sweep team is imperative).
- **Hand Signals:** Ride leaders should only use a minimum of necessary hand signals during the ride;
1) It will be easier for the group to remember and use a smaller amount of more critical signals.
2) It is safer to simply keep the rider's hands on the bars, rather than have them constantly taking a hand off the bar and their attention from the road for an unnecessary signal. As a ride leader, only use signals when you judge it absolutely necessary (debris or danger in the road and single file are good examples.) Another example is the "slow down" signal often used for a traffic light--the riders in the back can typically see the lights changing and unless it is a sudden or unexpected stop, it is really better to leave their hands free to work the handle bar controls and focus on slowing down.
- **Group cohesion:** Throughout the ride, the ride leader should "live in the rearview"; frequently checking the mirror to ensure the group is cohesive and ensure that no riders have been left back. The ride leader should also try to pay attention to the position of their alternate ride leader, in case they need to adjust the group's lane, or bring the group to single file so that the alternate can go back to sweep or come forward from taking a sweep position.
- **Traffic Light discipline:** Ride leaders can practice traffic light discipline by pacing their speed between intersections and monitoring the signal change counter available on most street lights;

if they see a light is going to change in 3-4 seconds and judge that the whole group cannot make it through the intersection, they should signal to slow down and stop the whole group at the light when it changes. **Note:** Only put this in practice if the speed of the group is slow enough to safely stop together and only if you are roughly 50-75 yards out from the intersection to ensure there is room to stop the group. If you cannot get the entire group through a light and the members are split up, it's not the end of the world, just be calm and look for an opportunity to get your front group into a right lane and moderate your speed to allow the rest of the group to catch up.

- **Group separation:** If the ride group is separated at an intersection or turn, you can often slow down your group by 5mph (or within the legal speed limit minimum) to allow the fragmented group to catch up without speeding. As always, be mindful of prevailing traffic conditions and pick a speed that's legal and safest for all concerned. Group separation is not a problem, as long as there are ample Road Captains on the ride to "triage the gap", they can get the fragmented riders to the next destination. **Note:** *Never* stop your group on the shoulder or side of the road or highway; this is only acceptable if you can safely get everyone, including those catching up, over to the side with at least 10-20 yards between them and the shoulder, e.g. Road-side rest stops or roadside observation points are good examples. If the fragmented group can't catch up, the sweep team members will get them safely to the next destination.
- **Stop signs, right and left turns:** Always be sure to come up to speed gradually when leaving a Stop, or making a turn, this avoids the *rubber-band effect* experienced when a ride leader takes off too fast, and ensures that the rest of the group behind you will not have to speed up to catch the group.
- **Passing:** If you are on a single lane road or highway and you must pass a car in front of the group, be sure to take the riders to single file on the left-most portion of the lane. This will let the group know you intend to pass and it will give each rider behind you the best line of site into the oncoming lane when it comes time for them to safely pass the car ahead. DO NOT pass unless legally permitted to do so AND ONLY pass if you are certain you can get the entire group around the vehicle(s) safely before the designated passing lane will end. When passing on a two lane road or highway, be sure to get out far enough ahead of the vehicle(s) you are passing before returning to your original lane; this will ensure there is room for the entire group to get over (if you move back too soon, riders behind you will be tempted to try to squeeze in too close to the front of the vehicle(s) you are passing).
- **Choosing the best Speed for group rides:** You should always follow the speed limit when leading a group. However, be sure to note whether or not it seems like cars are "bunching up" behind your group, and take measures to get your group over to a safer lane for that condition (the reality is, you may need to speed up to pass a semi on a hill or steeper grade, or to get your group over to the safer lane). Be aware that as road conditions deteriorate, you should judge whether or not going a little slower than the limit will better ensure the safety of the group. Be sure to give weight to prevailing traffic conditions when making judgments regarding the speed of the group (sometimes going slower than the limit can be even more dangerous). This is one of

the more difficult areas of judgment for the ride leader during a ride, so be calm & weigh the situation before making a decision. Most important, do not give in to the perceived “Judgments” you may feel from the group by going too slow.

At the end of the day, we are in this together, so just try to remember to have fun and enjoy the ride!