

Typical Group Riding Procedures

Before the ride

There will be a brief, pre-ride meeting before each ride to discuss the route, the scheduled stops, rider positions, etc. Riders should inform the Road Captain of any issues which may require the group to stop at a given time along the route.

The Road Captain will determine which bike has the smallest gas tank. This will determine how many miles you can ride between gas stops. She will decide when and where the group will stop. She will also inform every one of designated stops. It is best to keep the group to a manageable size, ideally five to seven riders. If necessary, break the group into smaller sub-groups, each with a Road Captain and a Tail Gunner. These sub-groups will maintain a 4 or 5-second space between each other.

Preparing to ride

When KSU time has arrived, the Road Captain will shout "Mount Up" to signal to the riders that it is time to prepare to ride. As each rider is ready, they will begin to line up behind the Road Captain while still in the parking lot.

Entering traffic

When the Road Captain sees that all riders are gloved, goggled, helmeted, sitting on their bikes, motors running, and ready to depart, she will check for traffic and enter the roadway. The Road Captain will not attempt to exit a parking lot unless there is room for all or most of the group to follow immediately.

If the group is split up by other vehicles, the Road Captain will take the slow lane and keep the speed relatively low until the group can form up in the positions the riders will keep for the duration of the ride. This may mean traveling slower than surrounding traffic, to encourage other vehicles to pass and allow the group to form up. Occasionally this cannot be accomplished until the group has made a lane change or entered a freeway, depending on where the entrance ramp may be.

Regardless of the Road Captain's signals, a rider is responsible for her own safety at all times. Ride Your Own Ride.

Riding

Once all members of the group are together, the group will take up a staggered formation and will stay in it most of the time during the ride. The Road Captain will signal for a change in formation if needed. The reasons for changing out of a staggered formation include the following;

- Road construction
- Poor road surface
- Curvy roads
- Narrow road or passage way
- Heavy pedestrian traffic in roadway

The Road Captain will not signal for single-file at each curve or turn but will expect the riders to choose their own path of travel.

Watching out for your sisters

Each rider should periodically check her mirrors for the riders behind her. If you see a rider falling behind, slow down so she can 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.

Checking for your sisters in your mirrors will also let you know if the group is split up by traffic or a stop light. If this occurs, the rest of the group will continue on slowly in the slow lane and allow the rest of the group to catch up. If the missing riders fail to catch up within a reasonable amount of time, the Ride Captain will find a safe place to pull the group over on the right side of the road and be prepared to get back on the road as soon as they see the missing riders approaching.

As the missing riders attempt to catch up, they will watch for a place where the group may have pulled over to wait for them. If this is the case, when they see the group, they will slow down enough to allow the group to enter the road in front of them and reform the group.

How to pass a signal forward

Sometimes a rider may need to inform the group of a personal issue that requires stopping as soon as possible. If this rider is near the back of the group, she will need to get the message to the front of the group safely. To do so, she will cautiously move up to the staggered rider in front of her and signal her need. That rider will then move up to the staggered rider in front of her and pass the signal on. This continues up to the Road Captain who will then find an “appropriate” place to pull the group over as soon as possible.

What if you need to stop immediately?

If a rider begins to have mechanical issues, a wardrobe malfunction or some other issue that requires an immediate stop, she should attempt to safely pull out of the group and make her way to the side of the road (right side if possible). The Tail Gunner will pull over with her. The rest of the group will continue on slowly to the next safe place to pull the group over on the right side of the road and be prepared to get back on the road as soon as they see the missing riders approaching.

At this point, one of two things will happen:

- The rider in distress will correct the problem and then she and the Tail Gunner will quickly, but safely, get back on the road and ride in the direction of the rest of the group. They will ride in the slow lane and attempt to catch up. As they ride, they will watch for the place that the group has pulled over to wait for them. When they see the group, they will slow down enough to allow the group to enter the road in front of them. The distressed rider will stay at the rear of the group, just in front of the Tail Gunner until the next stop.
- The rider in distress discovers that the issue cannot quickly be resolved. She and the Tail Gunner attempt to call members in the group until someone is reached and the problem is relayed to the group. It may take a few minutes to reach the group if they have not yet reached a safe place to pull over.

A rider will never be left alone. If it is determined that the distressed rider cannot continue the ride, the group will discuss their options to decide what to do.

Gap in Formation

If a void is created by a rider leaving the formation while riding, all riders in that column should move forward to close the gap rather than switching sides of the lane.

Lane Changes

When a group of motorcycles is changing lanes, many safety considerations come into play. The safest way is for the Road Captain to use her turn signal and then wait with the rest of the group for the Tail Gunner to move into the new lane and maintain a large enough gap to allow the rest of the group to safely move into the lane. This is called "securing the lane". (**See diagram 'C'**)

Sometimes traffic is too heavy and slow to allow such a large cushion of space. In that case, each rider must check to see that the lane is clear of traffic before entering it. Those in front will continue slowly to encourage any other vehicles that are in the middle of the group to change into another lane. (**See diagram 'D'**)

Note: the Tail Gunner may not always travel in the same path as the rest of the group. For example; a two-lane road is narrowing to a one-lane road. The Tail Gunner will frequently “close the door” by moving out of the group’s staggered formation and into the lane which is soon to disappear. This is to prevent a vehicle (cager) from trying at the last minute to pass part of the group and then have to cut into it when the pavement runs out. If the riders near the back of the group observe that the Tail Gunner is no longer in the position at the, they should maintain their own place in the group.

Rubber-Band Effect

When the Road Captain begins to accelerate, the second rider doesn’t immediately start to travel at the faster rate. Instead, a gap grows between them while the second rider is reacting. The second rider has to travel faster than the Road Captain to catch up. Then the third rider must go faster than the second rider in order to catch up, and so on. This phenomenon continues through out the formation as each rider increases her speed in order to catch up. By the time the phenomenon reaches the Tail Gunner, she may have to travel several miles over the speed limit to catch up with the group.

Another cause for the “rubber-band effect” is a “slinky” rider. This is a rider who fails to maintain a constant pace with the rest of the group. They slow down for a moment, then speed up to catch up the rest of the group, only to slow down again a few moments later. A ‘slinky’ rider puts every rider behind her at risk and should be reported to the Road Captain at the next stop.

The “rubber-band effect” increases the potential for accidents for two reasons. Other vehicles (cagers) may see the resulting gap in the formation as a perfect place to slip in. Also, the increased speeds mean that stopping time is decreased if the Road Captain has to stop. This is even worse if the Road Captain has to stop suddenly.

Weather and Road Conditions Tips

Inclement weather can be disruptive and discomfoting. If the weather is too severe, we will take shelter. Be extra cautious when rain first begins to fall. The road is slickest at that time. Avoid riding on the “glossy” (oil stained) area of the road at all times, but especially during or after a rain.

Stones on the road are dangerous...be careful. Gravel behaves like ball bearings on a hard surface.

Avoid potholes when you can safely do so. Potholes can damage bike rims and cause accidents. Signal others with a finger or a foot pointing down to the road hazard.

Mechanical/electrical breakdowns can happen to any motorcycle. Designate someone to help, or have someone with a tool kit and cell phone stop to help the problem motorcycle. Other riders should continue the run.

In Case of an Accident

In the event of an accident, do not panic-stop and do not rush to the scene. This may cause more problems. Safely pull over with the group. Do not move an injured person or remove their helmet. Do not allow a tow truck to take the downed bike. Locate a safe place to leave the motorcycle until a motorcycle hauler can pick it up.

Parking Lot Procedures

When parking, the Road Captain will direct the bikes to an area out of the way of traffic. No one wants their bike side swiped or damaged by passing vehicles. Riders must keep the line moving to avoid leaving anyone hanging out in the street. The Road Captain will attempt to find an area where everyone can park together. She will ride to the parking space farthest away from the area she has chosen to park the group, then turn away from the parking space at a near 90 degree angle and begin to back in to the space. The second rider performs the same maneuver to park next to the Road Captain. Then the third rider does the same to park next to the second bike, and so on. Riders are to remain in line until it is their time to park. When done correctly, all riders will be able to park quite quickly. (**See diagram 'A'**)

The same procedure is used to park along side a curb on the street. (See diagram 'B')

Traffic Signals and Stop Lights

You are more visible when riding in a group than you are riding alone. For this reason, there are certain circumstances where it is safer for the group to stay together and move as one unit. The following are two of the most common reasons;

- If the group is riding through an intersection and the traffic signal changes to yellow, each rider should tighten up her formation and stay with the group if possible to avoid getting separated.
- Similarly, when the group approaches a stop sign, the Road Captain will stop the group and check to make sure the intersection is clear. When she decides it's safe to cross, the group should attempt to stay together and cross as one unit. This is especially important when coming to a busy 4-way stop.

Law Enforcement (What if the group is pulled over?)

If a police officer stops the group, the Ride Captain will lead the group to a safe place. Stay in formation until safely parked. Once parked, do not leave your motorcycles. Allow the officer come to you. Do not get anything out or put anything in your bags. Do not say anything unless the officer asks you a question directly. The Ride Captain should be the only one who approaches the officer and should promptly identify herself.

Diagram 'A'
PARKING LOT PROCEDURES

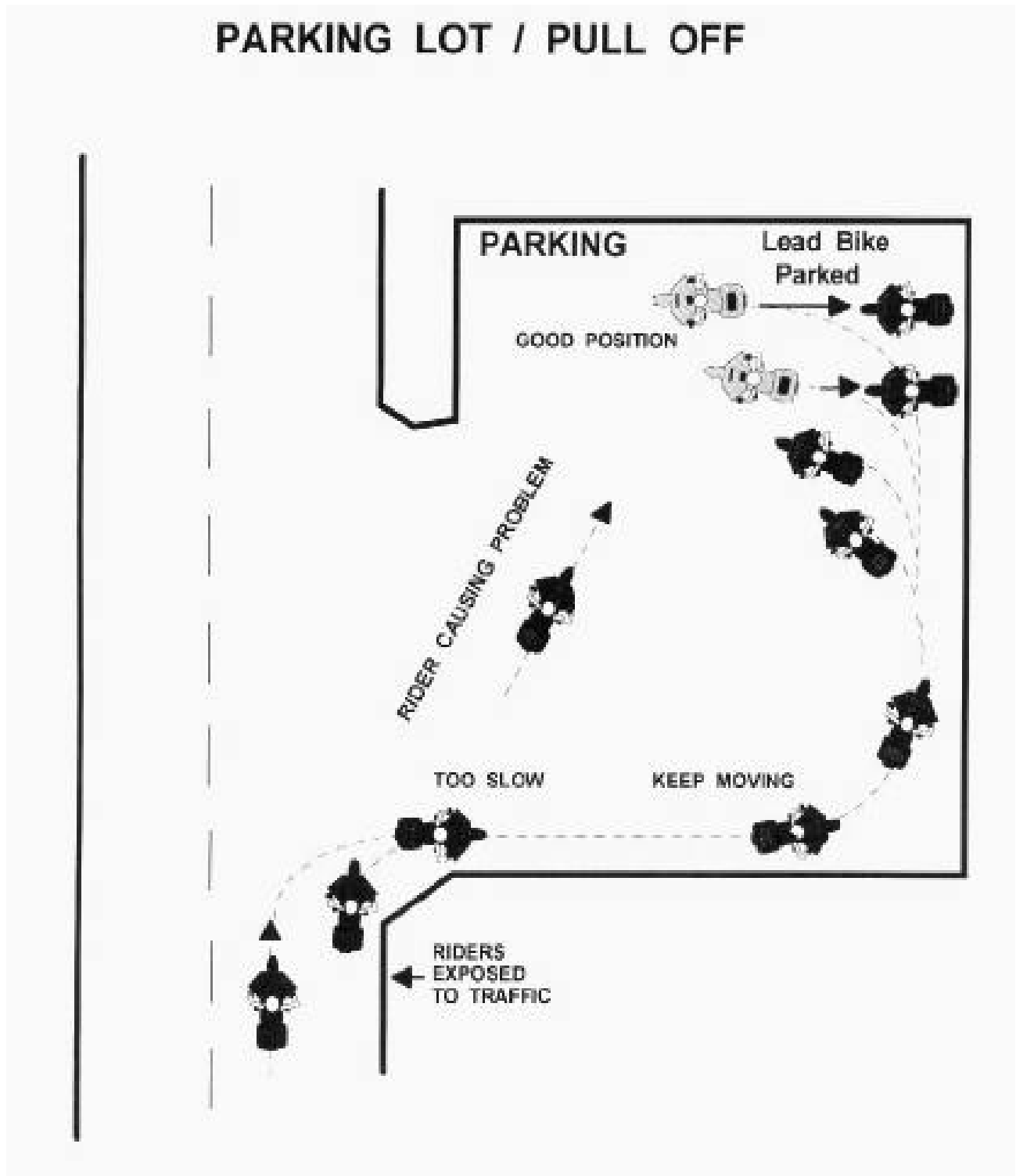


Diagram 'B'
PARKING PROCEDURES

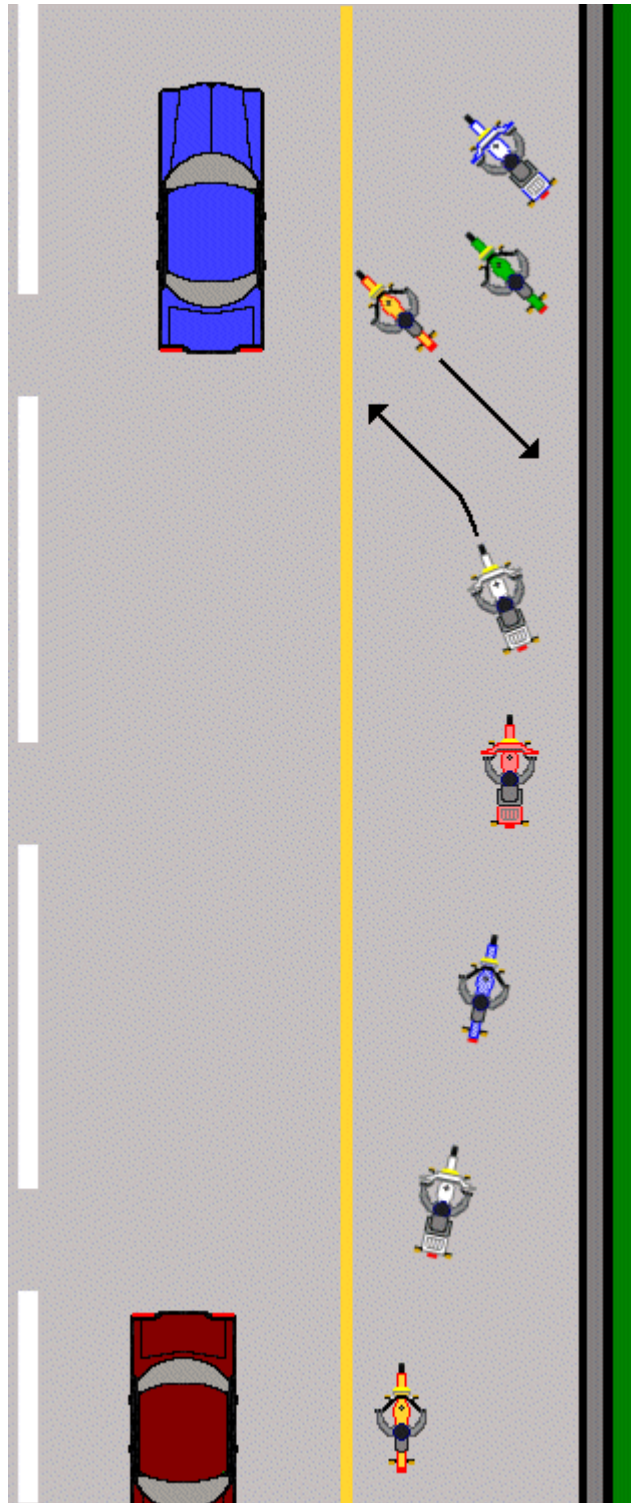


DIAGRAM 'C'
HIGH-SPEED TRAFFIC LANE CHANGE

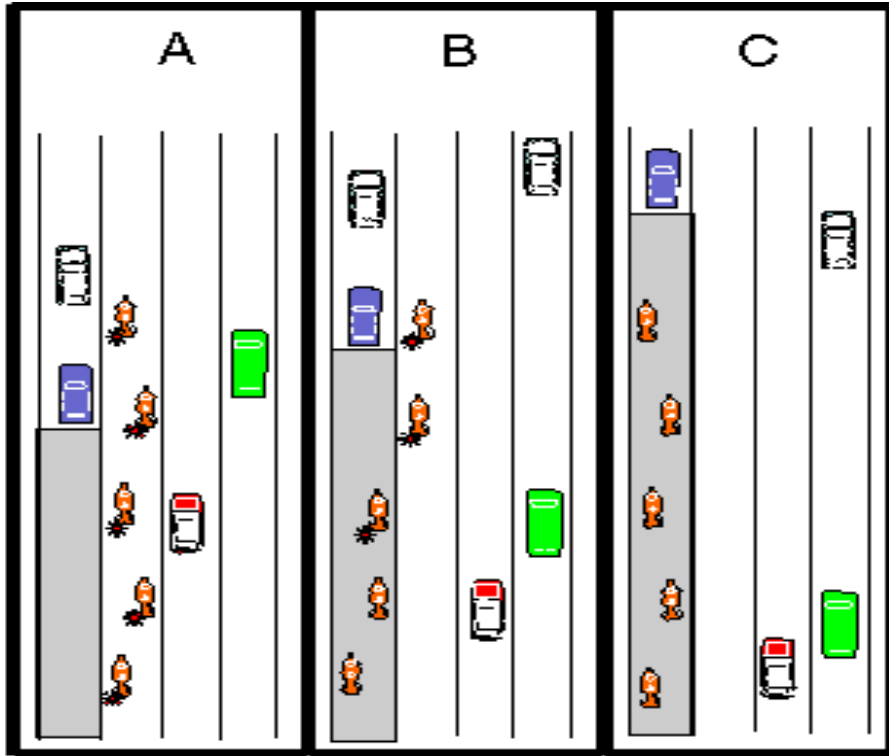


DIAGRAM 'D'
LOW-SPEED TRAFFIC LANE CHANGE

