

## **STAR 483 Ride Rules**

The purpose of riding in an organized group instead of an undisciplined pack is the additional safety that a well-organized group inherently generates. This comes from within the group and from the outside. When a group rides in an orderly fashion, people don't get in each other's way, and the organization of the formation itself discourages cars from attempting to cut in.

Once riding rules have been adopted by the Chapter, EVERYONE riding with the Chapter is expected to follow them. Anyone violating the rules, and compromising everyone else's safety, will be warned, and if their actions continue, will no longer be welcome to the ride with the Chapter.

The following rules are compiled from a number of sources. Most Chapters that ride in orderly formations follow similar rules. Details may vary from one organization to another. Sometimes because of the style of riding they do, or sometimes because there are a number of reasonable options, they chose the one that they prefer.

### **1. Formation**

Riding will be in a standard staggered formation unless the Ride Captain calls for single file. In staggered formation, the bikes form two columns, with the Ride Captain at the left column. The second bike will ride on the right-side of the lane, and will ride in view of the Ride Captain's rear view mirror. The other riders will position their bikes two seconds behind the bike directly in front of them, which puts them one second behind the diagonal bike. This allows ample time for any quick maneuvers or hard breaking should such occur. This formation allows each rider sufficient safety space, and discourages other vehicles from cutting into the line.

### **2. Ride Captain**

The Ride Captain is responsible for the safety of the entire formation. He must be aware of the length of the columns, and must gauge the passing of merges, highway entrances and exits, etc., to allow for maximum safety and keeping the group together. He must make sure that he leaves enough time/space for the formation to get into the appropriate lane before exits, etc.

All direction comes from the Ride Captain. The Ride Captain makes all decisions regarding lane changes, stopping for breaks and fuel, closing of gaps, turning off at exits, any concerns of what lays ahead, accepting / rejecting radioed messages from other individuals, and so on. **NO** individual will assert himself independently without direction from the Ride Captain to do so.

### **3. Tail Gunner**

The Tail Gunner serves as the eyes of the Ride Captain. He watches the formation, and informs the Ride Captain of any potential problems within the group. He watches other vehicles, and informs the Ride Captain (and anyone else with radios) of hazardous conditions approaching from the rear, such as vehicles trying to cut into

the formation and trucks passing with potentially dangerous wind blasts. He will watch for merging lanes, and will move into a merging lane (or stay in a merging lane just vacated by the group) in order to "close the door" on other vehicles that may otherwise find themselves trying to merge into the formation. At the Ride Captain's request, the Tail Gunner changes lanes before the formation, to secure the lane so the formation can move into it.

#### **4. New or Lesser Experienced Riders**

The position of newer and/ or lesser experienced riders will ride in the back of the group, before the Tail Gunner.

#### **5. Lane Changes**

All lane changes start with a radio request from the Ride Captain to the Tail Gunner. The Tail Gunner will (when it is safe to do so) move into the requested lane and will inform the Ride Captain when the lane is clear. **Lane changes are back-to-front.**

After having the Tail Gunner secure the lane, the Ride Captain raises his left hand to his shoulder and "pushes" his open hand toward the lane into which he wants to move. This signal is repeated by all riders.

The rider in front of the Tail Gunner will be the first to move over, the Ride Captain will be the last rider moving into the requested lane, with all riders filling in from the back to the front, one at a time, checking the lane before moving over.

#### **6. Emergencies**

In the unlikely event of an emergency situation, the Ride Captain will make every attempt to move the formation to the shoulder in an orderly manner. If a bike breaks down, let the rider move to the right. DO NOT STOP. The Tail Gunner will stop with the problem bike. The Ride Captain will lead the group to a safe place.

#### **7. Toll**

The Ride Captain should be aware of tolls and collect money from all riders in advance. When the formation arrives at the booth, the Ride Captain pays for all bikes to proceed through the toll. Many toll booths have counters that count the number of vehicles coming through. To accommodate these, ride through the toll booth one at a time.

When crossing a toll bridge, ALL RIDERS will remain in formation. Those with FASTRAK capability will ride at the rear of the pack allowing the Ride Captain to prepay for the allotted number of riders so as not to confuse the toll booth personnel when counting bikes rolling through.

#### **8. Hand Signals**

Our chapter uses the Motorcycle Safety Foundation hand signals. Copies of these hand signals are available on the website under "group ride" in the rider resource

page and at chapter meetings. Each rider (and passenger) should duplicate all hand signals given by the rider in front of him / her, so that the signals get passed all the way to the back of the formation. The following signals are used in addition to the standard (right turn, left turn, slow / stop) turn signal.

### **9. Starting the ride**

About five minutes before departing, all riders mount their bikes and prepare for the ride. Riders of each group must know where the group will stop for a rest and how long the ride will be, as well as the skill level required for the ride. It is always a good idea to go over hand signals with all those participating in a group ride and make sure that everyone understands them.

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