

# Organized Group Riding 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. 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.

**EVERYONE** riding with the Virginia – II Blue Knights, in a group, is expected to follow the rules listed below. Anyone violating the rules, and compromising everyone else's safety, will be warned, and if their actions continue, will no longer be welcome to ride with the Chapter, as a group rider.

The following rules are compiled from a number of sources and are the Chapter's Organized Group Riding Rules:

1. Formation: Riding will be in a standard staggered formation unless the leader calls for single file. In staggered formation, the bikes form two columns, with the leader at the head of either the right or left column as he chooses. The second bike will head the opposite, and will ride approximately one second behind the leader (and in the opposite side of the lane). 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 formation allows each rider sufficient safety space, and discourages other vehicles from cutting into the line.

2. Ride Leader: The Ride leader 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 lanes before exits, etc.

All direction comes from the Ride Leader. The Ride Leader 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 Leader to do so.

3. Tail Gunner: The Tail Gunner serves as the eyes of the Ride Leader. He watches the formation, and informs the Ride Leader of any potential problems within the group. He watches other vehicles, and informs the Ride Leader (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 Leader's request, the Tail Gunner changes lanes before the formation, to secure the lane so the formation can move into it.

4. New Riders: The position of new (inexperienced with GROUP riding) riders within the group is significant. New riders should be positioned as close to the front as possible.

5. Lane Changes: All lane changes start with a radio request from the Ride Leader 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 Leader when the lane is clear.

At this point, the Ride Leader has three options,

A. Simple Lane Change: This is an ordinary lane change, and can be used in most situations. After the Tail Gunner has secured the new lane, the Ride Leader will put on his directional signal as an indication that he is about to order a lane change. As each rider sees the directional signal, he also turns his on, so the riders following him get the signal. The leader then initiates the change. All other riders change lanes too. The important concept is the NO ONE moves until the bike in front of him has started moving.

B. Block Lane Change: This can be used interchangeably with the Simple Lane Change. It requires a little more work, but it is well worth the effort. It's quite impressive to watch, and gives the riders a tremendous feeling of "togetherness". This sounds a little complicated, but is actually very simple to do. After the Tail Gunner has secured the new lane, the Ride Leader will put on his directional signal as an indication that he is about to order a lane change. As each rider sees the directional signal, he also turns his on, so the riders follow him get the signal. The leader then raises his left arm straight up. Each rider repeats this signal. Then, as the leader lowers his arm to point to the lane into which he's moving, he actually initiates the change. All other riders lower their arms at the same time and change lanes too. This allows the entire formation to move from one lane to another as a single block.

C. Rear Fill-in: This is sometimes necessary if a long enough gap cannot be maintained in the new lane, for example when trying to move from the right lane to the center and vehicles from the left lane keep cutting into the opening. After the Tail Gunner has secured the new lane, the leader (usually at the suggestion of the Tail Gunner) will call for the group to fill in the space from the rear. He signals this by raising his hand to shoulder height and "pushing" it towards the new lane. All riders repeat the signal, and the last bikes move into the space in the new lane ahead of the Tail Gunner, then the next-to-last bikes move in ahead of those, and so on until the Ride Leader finally moves into the space ahead on the entire formation.

6. Mechanical Failures or Crashes:

Mechanical Failures: In the event a rider experiences a mechanical failure, he will signal to the riders around him to "come around or pass him" and also signal that he is pulling off the roadway. All other riders will continue in the formation (filling in the open spots) and alert the others with a radio broadcast that a bike has broken down and moving to the curb (right or left depending on the lane and safety corridor):

A. The Ride Leader will continue leading the group to a point that is either safe to stage on the side of the roadway or to a point further away that provides safety for all riders.

B. The Tail Gunner will stop with the distressed bike. Once the situation has been addressed, he will then talk with the Ride Leader about group options.

C. At no time will a fellow rider be left by himself. If a determination is made for the group to continue riding, either the Tail Gunner or another rider will be assigned to stay with the distressed bike and rider. If the Tail Gunner remains back, then The Ride Leader will select a new Tail Gunner to continue with the ride.

Crashes: In the event a rider is involved in a crash, all other riders will continue in the formation (filling in the holes) and alert the others with a radio broadcast that a bike has been involved in an crash.

A. The Ride Leader will continue leading the group to an immediate point that is safely on the side of the roadway that provides safety for all riders.

B. The Tail Gunner and the bike immediately to the front of the Tail Gunner will stop with the crash bike (putting their emergency flashers on). Once the situation has been addressed, the Tail Gunner will make necessary emergency notifications and render immediate First Aid while the other bike will direct traffic around the crash. One of these riders will talk with the Ride Leader about group options.

C. At no time will a fellow rider be left by himself. If a determination is made for the group to continue riding, several others will be assigned to stay behind. If the Tail Gunner remains back, then The Ride Leader will select a new Tail Gunner to continue with the ride.

6. Communications: Ordinarily the radio (CB) channel to be used will be channel 1. This is the Chapter's primary channel but may be changed as situation dictates. Communication between the Ride Leader and Tail Gunner will be via radio. Once lanes changes have been established, all movements will be done by hand signals initiated by the Ride Leader, as listed above. During lane changes, freeway entrance/exit or turns there will be no unnecessary radio chatter in order to keep the frequency clear for emergency movement notifications.

7. Speed: The group riding speed must be consistent with safe and free flowing traffic. The Ride Leader will dictate the speed based on his judgment of the riders, terrain and traffic situation. The Tail Gunner will keep the Ride Leader informed of issues with riders not being able to keep up and speed will be adjusted accordingly. Riders should try and keep the formation as mentioned above but should discuss issues with the Ride Leader and Tail Gunner at intermediate stops if the speed, distance or other factors are involved in keeping the pace.

8. While mentioned above that the Ride Leader makes all decisions regarding stops for breaks and fuel, each rider is responsible to make notifications that they need a break or need fuel. This can be done by using the radio or signaling to the riders around them so the message gets to the nearest radio or to the Tail Gunner. Once notifications have been received, the Ride Leader will be notified and will starting looking for an exit. It is imperative that the signal provide is consistent with the meaning so the Ride Leader understands where he needs to stop.

Approved July 8, 2007

Robert Hohn – President

Garrett Morford – Vice President

Keith Chase – Secretary/Treasurer

Chuck Stewart – Immediate Past President