

RIDE WITH PRIDE

By Jerry Heber

Motorcycle police perform precision riding drills and take great pride in doing so. It takes practice, focus and a spirit of teamwork. In a similar fashion, when we ride as a group we should take pride in our performance. Riding in a group is a privilege and privileges have accompanying obligations. The following guidelines illustrate good riding etiquette for all to follow:

LANE CONTROL: Each road/lane is divided into three sections. The center section should be avoided because it contains the accumulated oil and fluid discharges from vehicle traffic. Also, the center lane serves as a natural separation when riding in a group. Bikes should always ride staggered from right to left for proper spacing. When bike positions change, lane staggering should adjust in a timely fashion.

SPEED: The group leader is responsible for establishing road speed according to posted speed limits. Generally it is safe to travel the speed limit or even 5 mph faster. Exceptions include bad weather, road construction and immediately after completing a turn or passing thru a traffic light to insure the group is in tact. Traveling below the speed limit frustrates following traffic and encourages foolish attempts to pass. The ride leader(s) should always be aware of the 'tail' of the group with following vehicle traffic and make speed adjustments accordingly.

SPACING: Bikes should always be spaced alternately according to speed. At 30 mph bikes should be spaced a few lengths apart. At 50 mph, the separation should increase to several lengths. On open roads, bike spacing can be somewhat lax to allow more scenic appreciation, but too much separation makes it difficult for the leader to maintain awareness of the 'tail'. However, as the group approaches a traffic light or stop sign, the spacing should decrease with the decrease in speed. This practice will help insure the maximum number of bikes can pass thru a green light and reduces the time spent at a stop sign before other traffic interferes. Imagine an accordion that expands and contracts. As the speed of the group increases, the 'train' expands in length. As the speed slows, the 'train' contracts to a tighter formation.

TURNS: Right or left corner turns require more precision. Lane control is more important when executing turns. Staggering is much closer during turns and should be executed in tandem to expedite clearing the intersection. Inside bikes must turn tight enough to prevent forcing the outside bikes into dangerously wide turns. However, the outside bike must not cut off the inside bike. Single file turns require much more time to execute.

STOPS: Approaching a stop sign or red traffic light requires the group to slow, and contract spacing. Executing the stop and accelerating away thru the intersection should be a smooth and deliberate maneuver. Lagging cannot be tolerated.

Practice is imperative. Experienced riders should teach and encourage beginners. Riders who refuse to observe these rules of etiquette should not ride in groups. Either LEARN or LAG behind at the end or LEAVE the group. It's not fair for 'renegades' to sabotage an otherwise successful group ride. Let's all take PRIDE in our RIDE.