



Blue Knights

Law Enforcement Motorcycle Club
Texas Chapter XXXV



Safety Officer Newsletter-April 2018

Fellow Riders,

Another riding season is upon us! It's time to dust off the gear and get our motors running! As your new Safety Officer, I plan on getting a newsletter out to the club once a month. This month I would like to discuss basic riding safety tips as the season is just starting.

Remember, your bike has been sitting for a few weeks or months, so please remember to check your air pressures and tires. Check your battery, ensuring that it is properly charged so that your starter and electrical systems are running as they should. If you're like me, you're going to give your bike a good cleaning too. If anyone needs to know what the air pressures are for your motorcycle, google it or just call me and I will find the info for you, or look in your owner's manual.

Before you hit the road, everyone who will be in your group should hold a brief meeting to discuss the important details of your trip. For example:

- What route will we take?
- What rest stops are along the way?
- Who will lead the group? Ideally, the lead rider should be an experienced motorcycle operator who is very familiar with the route you are traveling (AKA road captain)
- Who will be the tail rider? Ideally, the tail rider should be an experienced motorcycle operator who has a cell phone to call for help if necessary.
- What will you do if someone becomes separated from the group?
- When stopping for gas or to rest, follow the leader to park so we don't collide in the lot.

When riding in a group, you should always follow the same safety procedures you'd use when traveling alone. However, the close proximity of other riders does add to the risk of operating a motorcycle. To stay safe in a group riding situation, remember the following tips:

- Use a staggered riding formation to provide a sufficient space cushion between group members. Each rider must have enough space and time to react to any hazards that you might encounter.
- If you're traveling on a curvy road or visibility is poor, ride in a single-file formation.
- Side-by-side formations should be avoided whenever possible. If you're traveling in this manner, you may not be able to swerve if you encounter an obstacle in your path.
- Riders on the same track should have a distance between them of at least 2 seconds.
- If your group must merge with another group at some point in the trip, let the first group lead.
- Motorcycle operators carrying passengers should ride on the right whenever possible. Novice riders shouldn't carry passengers at all.
- If someone in the group is riding a motorcycle with a sidecar, have him/her ride at the rear or front of the group.
- As you're riding, periodically check your rearview mirror to make sure the person behind you isn't falling behind. If necessary, slow down to allow him/her to catch up. Don't allow anyone to get separated from the group.

Ideally, your group should include people with similar skill levels and riding styles. But, if you are traveling with both new and experienced motorcycle operators, keep the novice riders in the middle of the group to prevent them from falling behind.

Under no circumstances should you mix alcohol and motorcycle riding. Do not allow anyone who has been drinking to travel in your group. A single unsafe rider puts everyone at risk.

Using Hand Signals to Communicate

When traveling with a group of motorcycle riders, hand signals are the best way to communicate. Using hand signals appropriately keeps everyone informed of the group's plans and reduces the risk of an accident caused by a surprised rider. Here are a few of the most popular:

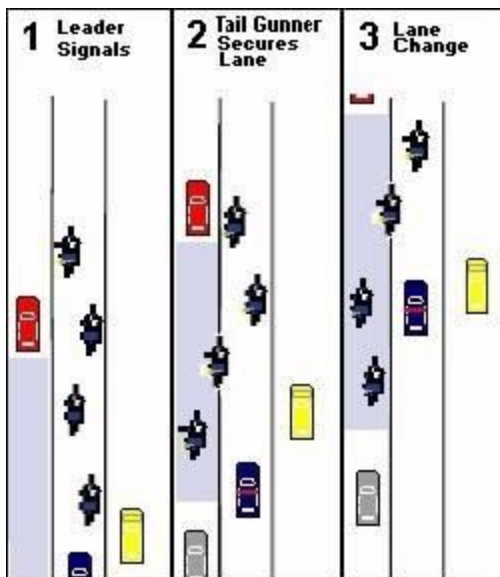
- To signal that you need to stop for fuel, place your arm out to the side and point to the tank with your finger extended.
- To signal that you need to stop for refreshments, keep your fingers closed and point to your mouth.
- To signal that you need a rest stop, extend your forearm, keep your fist clenched, and make a short up and down motion.
- To signal that there is a hazard in the roadway, point with your right foot or your left hand.
- To indicate that you wish to have another rider follow you, keep your arm extended straight up from the shoulder and keep your palm forward.
- To indicate the need to speed up, keep your arm extended straight out with your palm facing up.

Lane Changes

This is something that is near and dear to my heart. Lane changes are important to get right for safety reasons and also to protect fellow riders. And even though we are committed to safety, they sure do look great to others when we get it right.

Think of this scenario: you and your riding partner are on a 2 lane road. The lead rider goes to pass a car and signals and starts to overtake. His buddy follows along. After passing, the lead rider heads back to the right side of the road, passing in the path of the trailing rider. In the center of the road, there is gravel and other debris not in the tire tracks and it gets kicked up on the trailing rider, causing possible injury, and worst of all paint chips! LOL to avoid this, the lead rider should wait until the trailing rider gets back over and move as a unit, never crossing paths.

In a group, see the below diagram to see how lane changes are done in a group.



Please note that these riding techniques are just one way of many riding safely. There are many opinions and techniques but I follow these principles.

If anyone has techniques or safety tips they want to share or comment on, please forward them to me so I can include them in next month's newsletter.

See you all at the meeting!