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QUICK TIPS: The MSF'S Guide to Group Riding

Motorcycling is primarily a solo activity, but for many, riding as a group – whether with friends on a Sunday morning ride or with an organized motorcycle rally – is the epitome of the motorcycling experience. Here are some tips to help ensure a fun and safe group ride:

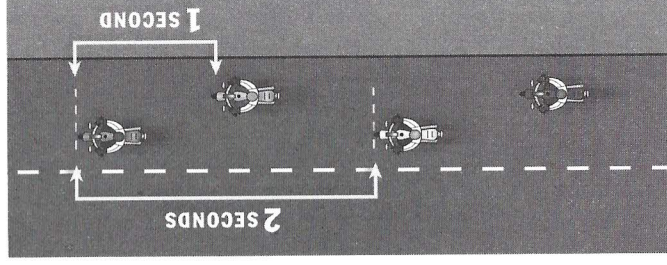
Arrive Prepared. Arrive on time with a full gas tank.

Hold a riders' meeting. Discuss things like the route, rest and fuel stops, and hand signals (see diagrams at right). Assign a lead and sweep (tail) rider. Both should be experienced riders who are well-versed in group riding procedures. The leader should assess everyone's riding skills and the group's riding style.

Keep the group to a manageable size, ideally five to seven riders. If necessary, break the group into smaller sub-groups, each with a lead and sweep rider.

Ride prepared. At least one rider in each group should pack a cell phone, first-aid kit, and full tool kit, so the group is prepared for any problem that might be encountered.

Ride in formation. The staggered riding formation allows a proper space cushion between motorcycles so that each rider has enough time and space to maneuver and to react to hazards. The leader rides in the left third of the lane, while the next rider stays at least one second behind in the right third of the lane; the rest of the group follows the same pattern. A single-file formation is preferred on a curvy road, under conditions of poor visibility or poor road surfaces, when entering/leaving highways, or in other situations where an increased space cushion or maneuvering room is needed.



Avoid side-by-side formations, as they reduce the space cushion. If you suddenly needed to swerve to avoid a hazard, you would not have room to do so. You don't want handlebars to get entangled.

Periodically check the riders following in your rear view mirror. If you see a rider falling behind, slow down so he or she may 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.

If you're separated from the group, don't panic. Your group should have a pre-planned procedure in place to regroup. Don't break the law or ride beyond your skills to catch up.

For mechanical or medical problems, use a cell phone to call for assistance as the situation warrants.

Group Riding Hand Signals

<p>Stop - arm extended out, palm facing back</p>	<p>Single File - arm and index finger extended straight up</p>	<p>Turn Signal On - open and close hand with fingers and thumb extended</p>
<p>Slow Down - arm extended straight out, palm facing down, swing down to your side</p>	<p>Double File - arm with index and middle finger extended straight up</p>	<p>Fuel - arm out to side pointing to tank with finger extended</p>
<p>Speed Up - arm extended straight out, palm facing up, swing upward</p>	<p>Hazard in Roadway - on the left, point with left hand; on the right, point with right foot</p>	<p>Refreshment Stop - fingers closed, thumb to mouth</p>
<p>You Lead/Come - arm extended out, palm pointing forward with index finger, swing in arc from back to front</p>	<p>Highbeam - tap on top of helmet with open palm down</p>	<p>Comfort Stop - forearm extended, fist clenched with short up and down motion</p>
<p>Follow Me - arm extended straight up from shoulder, palm forward</p>	<p>Pull Off - arm positioned as for right turn, forearm swung forward</p>	