

The Safety Corner

Group Riding - Nine to Five

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The Gold Wing Road Riders Association is a touring motorcycle organization comprised of people from all walks of life that share at least *two* common interest - the *Honda Gold Wing, and eating*. When a group of GWRRA members gather together, someone will usually suggest a group ride to a favorite eating-place.

The pleasure and the enjoyment of riding your motorcycle in a group with other GWRRA friends is an important part of what GWRRA is all about. *It's also fun!* However, any kind of group riding is *as different from individual riding as night is from day*. Whether you ride as an individual or in a group, in order to survive on the open road, your motorcycle riding habits and techniques must be constantly thought of as *defensive*. When you ride in a group, your actions not only affect you, but other riders as well. Therefore it is *important* to recognize that group riding is a "Team" effort.

There are *three* group riding styles: (1) "*Mass Riding*" is a group going down the road doing its thing, with no one paying attention to the group as a whole. (2) "*Leisure Riding*" is traveling with a group of people you know and some ground rules have been set and everyone agrees to abide by them. It is generally considered a little safer than *Mass Riding*, because the bikes travel down the road maintaining at least two seconds between each other. There are very little *formation* or *team* techniques in *Leisure Riding*. (3) "*Team Riding*" is a group of *trained* motorcycle riders that follow the group riding discipline outline in the **GWRRA Team Riding Manual** or the **Road Captains Course**.

This series of articles will only be dealing with *Team (Group) Riding*, the myths, the "what-ifs", and what *you* can do to improve *your fun, pleasure, and safety* on a group ride. Let us all join in making a group ride the fun it should always be.

Three to five bikes is the ideal size for any group of motorcycles. There is *safety-in-numbers* but only if the numbers are small. The myth that a large group of motorcycles going down the road will be safer is just that, a myth. Do you look cool? Sure you do, but only to yourselves. To the general motoring public, large groups of motorcycles become a **gang**. As a large gang, you invite motorists to *cut through* your formation, and you make it very difficult for the bikes in the back of the group to keep a safe following distance. The back of the group is always trying to *catch-up; they can't relax or enjoy the ride*. The *Drag* bike can't do its job of ensuring the safety and well being of the group and at 70 mph, the group is *stretched-out* over 1/4 mile of highway **or more!** To a motorist, it is like passing a long train.

The **GWRRA Team Riding Manual** and **The Road Captains Course** both *emphasize* the *ideal* size of a group is **three to five motorcycles**. If you have nine bikes on a ride, choose *two* sets of Road Captains and ride in separate groups about 1/4 mile apart. You will find that *everyone* will have more *fun* and **you will be riding in a safer group!** The *Drag* bike will always be able to see the whole group. When the *Lead* requests a lane change, you will be able to change lanes as a group instead of as individuals. The motoring public will be impressed by your group riding skills and will see you not as a *gang*, but as a group of responsible individuals that care about each other and them. Not only will you be able to relax and enjoy the ride more, you will find you are much more refreshed when you arrive at your destination.

So let us all follow the rules for *Team Riding* and go from **Nine to Five**

