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**Combat Veterans  
Motorcycle Association**

**Space Coast Chapter 20-1  
Florida**



**SOP: Members riding together in a Formation & Duties of the  
Road Captain and Tail Gunner**

Revised: 1 July 2017 by BUG

Written by Hammer & Jumper

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- 1) This Standard Operation Procedure (SOP) is provided in order to ensure all members from 20-1 are informed and are knowledgeable of all Safety procedures during any ride. The Road Captain will give the safety briefing and the lay out of the route before departing.
  - 2) The following sequence should be as follows;
    - The road captain will be at the front and on the left of the formation.
    - Next is the Chapter Executive Board (CEB), if they choose to do so. The members of the CEB can ride anywhere, within the formation during the ride.
    - Then the CVMA FL members with their family and spouse.
    - Followed by all non-chapter CVMA FL members.
    - The Tail Gunner will bring up the rear of the formation.
    - Trikes and bikes with sidecars will travel in a semi-staggered formation after the last motorcycle and before the Tail Gunner so the lead bike has a clear view of the tail gunner.
  - 3) An electronic copy of this SOP will be available for reading and/or downloading on the Chapter website.
  - 4) This SOP has been reviewed by the CEB, Safety Officer, Senior Ride Captain, and approved by the Commander.
  - 5) This SOP will be reviewed periodically by the Chapter Safety Officer, Senior Road Captain and will be updated as required with the approval of the Commander.

**Always Come Prepared to the rally point:**

- Be prepared to depart on time with a full gas tank.
- Check your tire pressure according to your manual.
- Have a sun pass handy to pay for the tolls. (NOT REQUIRED But helpful)
- Plan your riding attire appropriately according to the weather forecast.

**Pre-ride brief:**

The leader will discuss safety, the route, rest stops, fuel stops, and hand signals. The Road Captain's, should be experienced riders who are well-versed in group riding procedures.

**Duties of the Road Captain:**

- Do a recon of the objective, to gather information for the best route of the upcoming ride. Have a alternate plan, just in case Murphy's Law kicks in. Look for any obstacles that might interfere with the ride.
- The Road Captains, (Leader and Tail Gunner) **MUST** have a visual line of sight of the formation at all times by using their mirrors and observing surrounding traffic.

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- Give a safety briefing prior to departing for any ride.
  - Maintain a satisfactory speed for the entire formation to travel safely.
  - Explain to new members/guests how we ride in a formation.
  - New or inexperienced group riders should buddy up with someone prior to the ride to become familiar with this SOP
  - Should provide the name, address, and phone number of the destination.
  - Go over group lane change procedures if a rider decides to pull out of the formation.
  - Conduct a head count to ensure everyone arrived safely.
  - The Road Captain and the Tail Gunner will operate as a team using Communication

### **Duties for the Tail Gunner:**

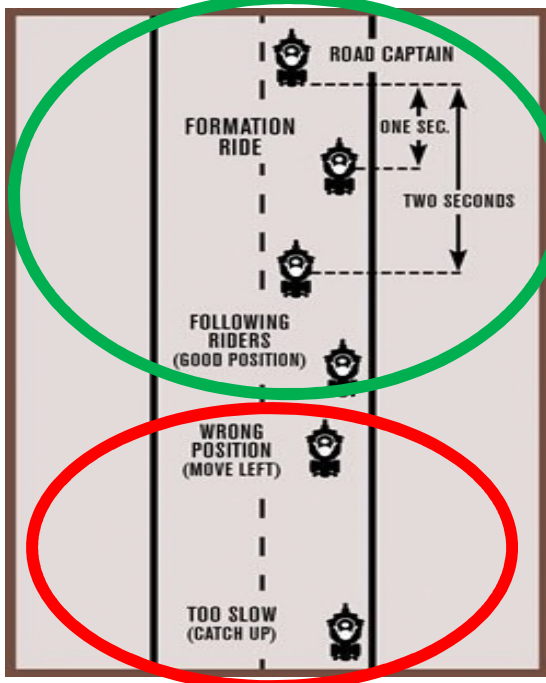
- The Tail Gunner will ride at the rear, unless otherwise directed by the Road Captain.
- The Tail Gunner will be responsible for holding a lane open while making lane changes.
  - *To be clear as to what this means; When the Lead Road Captain signals a lane change, NOBODY moves over until the lane is secured by the Tail Gunner (Sweeper. Once the Tail Gunner has moved over and the lane is clear of any and all traffic, then we move over behind the lead Road Captain.*
- The Road Captain will notify the Tail Gunner about all lanes changes. The Tail Gunner will establish a new lane prior to the formation changing lanes.
- If any member's motorcycle breaks down, the Tail Gunner will stay with the member to provide support and will update the Road Captain or a member of the CEB.
  - *This is only for the tail gunner or designated individual to pull over. We cannot have 10 or more bikes stopped at one location.*
- If the Tail Gunner stops to render assistance, the last rider will assume the duties of the Tail Gunner.
- All Road Captains and the Tail Gunner should have a portable tire inflator, jumper kit fully charged, first aid kit and a tool kit.

### **Riding in formation:**

- The lead rider (Road Captain) should be in the front and on the left side of the formation. A staggered riding formation allows a proper space cushion between motorcycles so that each rider has enough time and space to maneuver /react to any hazards. Below is a sample of riding in a staggered formation.
- A single-file formation may be required on a curvy road, under conditions of restricted visibility, poor road surfaces, or other situations where maneuvering room is restricted. Under normal conditions, same side spacing should be a maximum of 2 seconds.
- The Road Captain will establish and maintain a safe speed and everyone behind will be responsible for keeping a close and tight formation behind the lead bike. If anybody can't keep up, they should pull out and drop back to the rear of the formation. Don't forget **SAFETY FIRST.**
- Stay in your lane in the formation, and **DON'T** crisscross in the formation.
- While being in formation if the bike directly ahead of you pulls out give that bike enough room to safely leave the formation. Once the bike has cleared the formation pull up and fill that spot. **DON'T CRISS CROSS, JUST PULL FORWARD, The bike in the opposite row should wave you forward so you know it is clear and you both know what is happening.**
- If there's a rider that has plans to break out from the formation before a scheduled stop, the rider needs to inform the Road Captain or Tail Gunner before starting that segment of the

ride.

- When riding, the formation should be tight during heavy traffic. Don't let any other vehicles break up or join our formation. If there's a vehicle that wants to exit or change lanes, slow down and give them the go-ahead.
- When stopping at a traffic light or stop sign, all bikes pull up, and directly behind the bike in front of you. When the group is half way through a light and it changes to red, you should stop at the light. The Road Captain will slow the group that made it through the light down until the rest of the group can catch up. If after a few miles the second group has not caught up the Road Captain will make a decision to pull over at a safe place and watch for the second group. Once the second group is in sight the Road Captain and group one will pull back out and continue leading the formation.
- When we stop to get gas, everyone should fill up, regardless how much gas you have left in your tank.



Example of 1 second & 2 second rule.

Staggered formation.

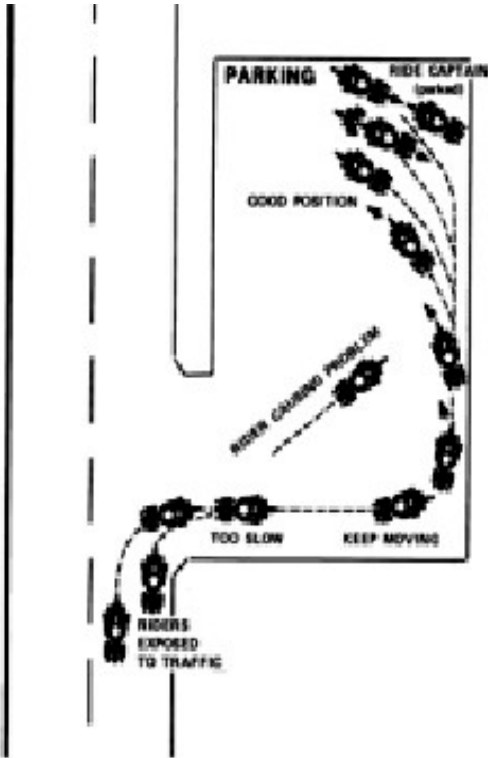
Do's & don't

### Lane changing:

- When the Road Captain wants to change lanes, he/she will notify the Tail Gunner by radio (if available) or signal. The Tail Gunner will pull over to the desired lane and block traffic. Once the Tail Gunner has control of the lane, the Road Captain will put on a turn signal and give a hand and arm signal to make the lane change.
- The Tail Gunner will then thank the vehicles behind them.
- When riding in a formation, when turning left or right, the inside bike will be turning sharp close to the curb. Then the outside bike is turning wide. Give the inside bike enough room to turn.
- Always be sure to scan your sector.
- Make sure that your signal lights are working before you start riding.
- When the Road Captain passes back a hand signal (change of direction, hazards on the road, etc.) **EVERYONE** in the formation will pass it back until it gets to the Tail Gunner.

**Parking:**

Riders should pull up to the left or right of each rider ahead depending on which side we are parking, so that everyone can immediately back into the parking space without waiting. When the group pulls into a parking lot, don't try to be creative. Follow the parking drill with everyone else. Don't ride up behind the next rider, pull alongside, to the left or right and immediately roll your bike back into the parking space.



**Backing up into a parking space**

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### **If you're separated from the group:**

Don't panic or do anything foolish. We will have a pre-planned procedure in place to regroup. We have Rally points throughout the ride. If anyone gets lost or separated from the group, go to the last rally point and call the Road Captain or anyone that you know within the chapter.

### **Arriving to our final destination:**

After arriving at the final destination all riders are free to disburse however they choose. If you are unsure how to get back home, ask the Road Captain for directions. After you arrive at home, let everyone know, preferably by posting Returned to Base (RTB) on the Google Group.

### **Inspect your motorcycle:**

All riders are responsible for making sure their motorcycles are mechanically up to the task. Everyone should do a weekly inspection on their bike. If your bike is unsafe, you are unsafe and put others at risk. Check for the following items:

- Check the tire air pressure (PSI) and your air shocks.
- Check your turn signals and your head light.
- Check your horn for operation.
- Check all gauges for operation.
- Check all fluids, to ensure they are topped off and you have no leaks.
- Once in a while check the battery for rust and lose connection.
- Carry extra fuses for your bike.
- Carry a small tools kit.
- Check all add on accessories to ensure they are tight and secure. (IE. Flag pole, flags, etc.)

## Hand, and Arm Signals

- All signals from any bike will only be given by the operator! At no time will the passenger give signals.

# MOTORCYCLE HAND SIGNALS



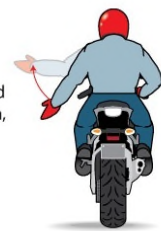
**Left turn**  
Arm and hand extending left, palm facing down



**Right turn**  
Arm out, bent at 90° angle, fist clenched.



**Stop**  
Arm extended straight down, palm facing back.



**Speed Up**  
Arm extended straight out, palm facing up, swing upward.



**Slow Down**  
Arm extended straight out, palm facing down, swing down to your side.



**Follow Me**  
Arm extended straight up from shoulder, palm forward.



**You Lead/Come**  
Arm extended upward 45°, palm forward pointing with index finger, swing in arc from back to front.



**Hazard in Roadway**  
On the left, point with left hand; on the right, point with right foot.



**Single File**  
Arm and index finger extended straight up.



**Double File**  
Arm with index and middle finger extended straight up.



**Comfort Stop**  
Forearm extended, fist clenched with short up and down motion.



**Refreshment Stop**  
Fingers closed, thumb to mouth.



**Turn Signal On**  
Open and close hand with fingers and thumb extended.



**Pull Off**  
Arm positioned as for right turn, forearm swung toward shoulder.



**Cops Ahead**  
Tap on top of helmet with open palm down.



**Fuel**  
Arm out to side pointing to tank with finger extended.

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## Riding on a military installation

### PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

These items are required for riding on DOD installations and are recommended by the Motorcycle Safety Foundation for off-base riding:

- **Department of Transportation (DOT) Approved Helmet:**

Snell Memorial Foundation (SNELL).

- **Eye Protection:**

Shatter resistant wrap around glasses, or full-face shield (properly attached to helmet) designed for impact and shatter resistance. A windshield, non-safety rated eyeglasses, or a fairing alone does not constitute proper eye protection. ANSI approved motorcycle goggles may be worn but must not restrict peripheral vision.

- **Properly Worn Long-Sleeved Garment:**

A shirt or jacket that covers the arm to the wrist, such as leather, Kevlar, denim, and/or corduroy that contain impact-absorbing padding might be optional.

- **Properly Worn Long-Legged Trousers:**

Both legs covered to the ankle, such as leather, Kevlar, denim, and/ or corduroy that contain impact-absorbing padding might be optional.

- **Appropriate Foot Wear:**

It is strongly encouraged that lace up military boots or sturdy leather.

- **Appropriate Hand Wear:**

Wear full-fingered gloves or mittens.

- **Reflective Vest:**

A reflective safety vest, when worn, will be worn as the outer garment, as it is intended to be worn. Only international orange, yellow and lime green colors are permitted. Each vest will have as a minimum, 2 1-inch reflective strips which extend from the front hem, up and over the shoulders to the rear hem, or from side to side on both the front and back of the vest. Military personnel are required to utilize all PPE.

- **Most importantly don't forget your military ID card**



