

CROSSROADS HOG SAFETY THOUGHT
AUGUST 2011

MERGE don't TRAP

It's been my pleasure so far this season to participate in a number of great group rides as well as some solo riding. When doing so, I can't help but be observant – looking for both good and 'notsogood' riding techniques that I can base my safety articles on. It is not my intention to be critical but, rather, to be helpful. This month's article is one founded on some of this season's experience.

Here's the scenario:

You are part of an organized group of 10 bikes. There is an experienced Road Captain in the Lead position and another at the Sweep position. Everyone is adhering to Crossroads protocol and riding in a 2-second stagger formation. The group is on an Interstate Highway riding in the right-hand lane.

The group is approaching an entrance ramp and there are vehicles coming down the ramp to merge with the existing traffic. For any number of reasons, the Road Captains cannot move the group to the left in time to avoid the ramp traffic. What should riders in the group do? What should they not do?

The best way to handle this situation is to let that vehicle into the group by making space for it. The rider that is going to end up directly behind the (ramp) vehicle should slow down to make space for it. Signal to the riders behind you with the appropriate hand signal and a touch of the brake (flash the brake light) that you are slowing to allow the car or truck in. Then, space yourself a safe distance behind the vehicle (3-seconds). The rest of the group should adjust speed appropriately and maintain the stagger formation.

The Sweep RC should notify the Lead RC what has happened if they are in radio contact. If radios are not being used, the Lead RC should be able to see, in the mirrors, that there is a non-motorcycle within the formation.

Typically the vehicle that inserted itself in the formation will get out of the motorcycle group's formation as soon as possible (safely). If that does not occur, the group can encourage departure by reducing speed to a level a bit slower than the speed limit. This is the Lead RC's decision to make and enact with advice from the Sweep RC.

THAT'S WHAT WE **SHOULD DO**. Here's some of what we **SHOULD NOT DO**:

1. Road Captains - Don't speed the group up to clear the ramp. That will cause 'rubber-banding' and may leave the group fragmented.
2. Road Captains - Don't reduce speed drastically or suddenly to allow the ramp traffic to get on ahead of the group. This could lead to a collision or random sudden lane changing within the group.
3. Road Captains – Don't change lanes (left) suddenly or hurriedly. This could cause confusion, collision, and fragmentation in the group.
4. Riders – if you're the bike(s) in the position where the ramp traffic is going to insert, don't change lanes (to the left). This will TRAP the vehicle within the group; confuse the riders behind you; and leave you stranded in the left lane. **THINK AHEAD** – be observant – when you see the ramp traffic, manage the situation; make space to allow it into your lane as described above.
5. Riders – once a vehicle has inserted itself to your formation, **BE PATIENT**. Wait for it to move out. Let the Road Captains manage the situation. **DON'T MOVE LEFT AND PASS!!**

Ramp traffic can present a serious hazard for us when riding in a group. But it can be managed so as to reduce the risk. ***The SMARTER we ride, the BETTER the RIDE.***

That's my thought for this month. I hope it is helpful.

Mike "the safety guy" Hoffman