

February 26, 2006

CROSSROADS HOG MEETING

SAFETY MINUTE

So, you're going to ride in a group. – be part of the pack – HOG in all its glory.

Good ! Great ! Welcome ! You are about to have a really great experience.

Let's talk a bit about what that means.

Responsibility is a growing reality for all of us in so many ways. Just think about it in terms of mobility –more specifically, your wheels.

You started out crawling – then tottering – then walking – then somebody gave you WHEELS!! It might have looked like a horse, or maybe a car, but sure enough – your mobility increased dramatically. *And so did your ability to inflict damage upon yourself and your environment – but your parents took responsibility for that.*

Later on you got a tricycle, a big wheel, a BICYCLE, a car, then – in your case – a MOTORCYCLE. With each vehicle your mobility increased and – again – so did your potential to do damage and your responsibility to manage that increased (your parents' decreased).

Now, you're accepting another change in responsibility. Now you are going to take yourself to another level of responsibility. It's important that you be very aware of that. It does not, in any way, detract from all the really great parts of riding with a group; but, it is a very real part of the experience.

When you're out riding by yourself, you are responsible for yourself and, to some degree, others on or near the road. You do have the capability of doing some damage.

When you're riding in a group your potential for harming others increases. You are riding in close proximity to others and a mistake or mishap on your part, affects the status of your fellow riders very quickly. In Group Riding you share the responsibility for ensuring that the ride is safe and fun for everyone involved.

There's a lot to know when it comes to riding in a group. **It is your responsibility to learn it and bring that knowledge to the ride.**

We are going to conduct group riding courses as soon as we can safely get on the road. We will also do "mini courses" for specific skill sets that, hopefully, you find helpful in improving your riding skill. But until the weather cooperates, let's talk a bit about what you can be doing now to prepare.

During our meeting on February 26th, we are going to review the 12 primary hand signals we (Crossroads) use in group riding. It is important that we all know and use the same signals. Good communications within the group reduces our risk.

We stress using both hand signals and the signaling equipment on our bikes. Redundancy increases the probability of successfully communicating. Think of it as insurance.

We also stress the importance of making your hand signal **OBVIOUS**. This is to assure that your fellow rider knows you are trying to communicate something. If your signals are "lazy" they can easily be misinterpreted as stretching, loosening up, scratching, get the point?

ie. When you are signaling a left hand turn, put your left arm out straight from your shoulder and point. When you are signaling a right hand turn, the upper part of your left arm should be straight out from your shoulder and the lower part of your arm pointing straight up so that your elbow forms a 90° angle.

You can review/learn hand signals now, in the Winter, while you are anticipating riding season. I'll have hand outs at the meetings from now on. You'll find them on the Crossroads Web Page (animated) as well.

We want you all to note – **this is important** – Crossroads does not endorse nor use the technique of pointing at a road hazard on the right with the right leg/foot or the right hand. Using your right hand will cause an abrupt change in the speed of your bike and using the right leg/foot has a high probability of causing you to drift left in the lane. Point with your left hand over your helmet. (see the diagram). We are all used to signaling with our left therefore the probability of the signaling activity affecting our riding is minimized.

Another thing you can do now to enhance your riding season is sign up for a Motorcycle Safety Course. (they fill up fast)

In Michigan you must have a valid Motorcycle endorsement on your valid Michigan Drivers License to operate a motorcycle (even if you are the governor). If you are under 18 or have failed the Motorcycle skills and knowledge tests twice, you **MUST** take an accredited Motorcycle Safety course.

If you want a really great way to sharpen your skills or to sharpen up as you come out of hibernation, taking a course is a great way to do it.

There are at least 29 sites in Michigan to choose from. I'll have a handout available at every meeting or you can go to the Dept of State's website and get the information. Just type **Motorcycle Safety Training in Michigan** in your search engine and follow the clues.

If you have any suggestions of topics you would like to have me present, please let me know. You can email me at hoffmike@msn.com or mikeandleni@sbcglobal.net , catch me at a meeting, on a ride, or call me at 517-545-0757.

Think about riding safely until Spring then RIDE SAFELY

Mike, *the safety guy*.