

**Crossroads HOG
Safety Thought
January 2007**

Announcements:

On February 10th we will hold a special Group Riding Training for any member who would like to become a Lead or Sweep. The class will focus on the Lead and Sweep responsibilities in Group Riding – Crossroad Style. This course is NOT weather dependent as it will not include “on-the-road” training.

On March 10th and April 14th we will hold a Group Riding Training for all of our HOG Chapter. Everyone is invited; riders new to Group Riding are strongly urged to attend. These classes will not include an “on-the-road” segment if weather is non-conductive. However, the classroom portion of the course will be conducted regardless of weather.

Classes will be held at All Saints Lutheran Church, 12701 Highland Road (M59 east of Hartland). They will begin promptly at 10 AM.

Call Mike Hoffman with questions @ 248-760-0896 / 517-545-0757 or email at hoffmike@msn.com.

LEAVING THE GROUP

Sometimes it is necessary to leave the group before the planned ride ends. This can be a planned occurrence or an emergency. I'll try to deal with both briefly here but want you to know we cover this in detail in our Group Riding Training.

If you know you are going to have to leave before the ride ends it is important that you communicate that to the Lead rider and Sweep rider of your group. Do so before the ride begins making sure you accurately communicate when it is that you will be leaving.

Again, at the last stop before you intend to leave, contact your Lead and Sweep and remind them that you are leaving. They will choreograph your departure such that it causes minimal disruption and danger. They will ask you to change your position in the group to locate just ahead of the Sweep. They will inform the rest of the riders in your group of the change in positions and your departure location. Say your goodbyes to your riding group members now.

When you reach that point of departure signal well in advance with lights and hand signals. If you can make eye contact with the Sweep do so. Exit carefully. Don't worry about waving – everyone knows you are leaving – keep your hands on the bars.

If you are going to leave the group at a planned stop rather than while riding, it is still important that you remind the Lead and Sweep that you are leaving. They will reorganize the group to ride on. Say your goodbyes and make sure you do not hold up the group.

If your need to leave the group is unplanned – equipment problem, personal problem – your primary focus must be to communicate – NOT what the problem is but that you are leaving. Turn on your turn signal, make eye contact with those nearest you, give a hand signal if you can do so safely, and pull out in the direction you indicated. When you can safely do so, stop – off the road. The Sweep will stop with you.

If you are riding behind the bike that has just left unexpectedly DO NOT STOP WITH THEM. Hold your position in the group just as though they are still there. Do not “close ranks” at this time. The Lead will bring the group to a stop as soon as it can be done safely. The Sweep will advise the Lead of the situation and they will determine the appropriate course of action.

If you are riding behind a bike that has just signaled that they need to exit – give them room to do so safely. Do so without making any more abrupt change in your speed than is necessary. We ride in a stagger to enable this to happen safely.

If you suddenly find that you are the last rider in the group (Sweep has stopped to help), take up the role of the Sweep as best you can. If you have a radio, make contact with the Lead. If you don't, turn on your passing lamps or your high beam.

When a group has lost members – planned or unplanned – it is important that it reorganize to assure there are no empty “slots.” As noted above, however, this adjustment is not to be made while moving. The adjustment takes place when the group is stopped. It can be discussed and explained and all members can be made aware of the change before getting back on the road. We do this because empty “slots” are an invitation to incursion and because passing in the same lane is hazardous and, in many states, against the law.

That's the Crossroads method. It may not be the only safe way to handle this situation but it certainly is one safe way. And the critical element of group riding is for all of the riders to know how things are handled and to do it that way.

Thanks for listening. Any questions or comments?

Mike – the “safety guy”