

RAMP TRAFFIC

You are cruising down the highway with your fellow Crossroads HOG members enjoying a great ride. The group is riding in a proper stagger formation in the right-most lane of the Interstate. Then you see it; coming onto the highway from an entrance ramp on the right is another vehicle. And, it appears that that motorist expects to merge with the group of motorcycles. What can he/she be thinking? What are you going to do? This is a common situation – one that most, if not all, of us have experienced.

Supposedly **we all learned** how to “merge” early in our driving/riding career – even that guy on the ramp. **We all know** that the traffic on the highway has the right-of-way and that the traffic on the ramp is to adjust speed so as to merge safely. **We also know** that traffic on the highway is expected to adjust to make space for the merging vehicle.

When we are riding alone we tend to do it the right way – unless an “attitude” gets in the way. But what about those times when we are part of a group ride? What is different? Let’s explore that dynamic a bit.

First of all, let’s admit that we all have a bit of a “herd” mentality when it comes to being part of a group of bikes. We don’t like it when something or someone inserts themselves to the group – messes up the formation – cuts us off from the rest of the group. That is normal – don’t feel any guilt, just recognize that its part of the dynamic. Understand also that it has to be kept “in check.”

When the group is traveling down the highway, the Road Captains are responsible to managing its movement. That includes watching for and managing merging traffic. If it is necessary and possible to safely make an adjustment with the whole group, they will do so properly. This might include a lane change (move left) or a speed adjustment (reduce speed).

It is not always possible, however, to make the adjustment as a group. In those instances it is your responsibility, as an individual, to do what you can to allow the merge to occur safely. You may have to slow to allow the motorist in. If so, do so with proper hand and light signals. Leave a proper interval of space between you and the vehicle and maintain the staggered formation. Facilitate a safe merge.

The Road Captains will be aware of the situation and, if any adjustment is called for, they will initiate it. Here are a few things that should not be done.

1. Road Captain (Lead) do not speed up so as to make space ahead of the incurring vehicle thereby encouraging those behind it to speed up and pass.
2. If you are behind the incurring vehicle, do not tailgate, flash your lights or in any way show aggravation in an effort to encourage the vehicle to vacate its position.
3. If you are behind the incurring vehicle, do not change lanes and increase speed to pass and rejoin the group.

The road captains will make safe adjustments if they judge it necessary to maintain the safety of the group. Be patient and alert for that to occur.

In many cases the incurring vehicle will be aware that they have “split” a group and will “move on” thereby allowing the group to reform. Do so without “reckless” acceleration. A slight increase in speed will close the gap quickly enough. Communication between the lead Road Captain and the Sweep Road Captain will facilitate a smooth reunification of the group.

In summary, be aware of Ramp Traffic and be alert for an adjustment of the group’s speed or lane position. AND, be ready to safely adjust as an individual should that be necessary.

That’s the Safety Thought for this month. I hope it is helpful to you.

Ride safely and have fun.

Mike “the Safety Guy”