

MARCH 2007 SAFETY THOUGHTS
BRIGHTON CROSSROADS HOG

It's coming! Warm temperatures, salt and snow free roads, more daylight – all those environmental elements that make up RIDING WEATHER !

Your HOG chapter has plenty of opportunities planned and being planned for you to participate in throughout the season. And, although, each has its own individual theme and attraction, they all have one thing in common. Every event calls for RIDING IN A GROUP.

To get maximum enjoyment out of the event, we all need to know how to do that the CROSSROADS way. We offer group riding classes to help you learn and to help you refresh your knowledge. We also offer “tips” in our newsletter and at our meetings. This month's tip addresses formation and spacing in group riding.

Crossroads rides in a STAGGER formation. The first bike (lead rider) in the group rides in the left portion of the lane. The next (2nd) bike back rides in the right portion of the lane spaced back from the first bike a distance we determine with a time interval. I'll explain that soon.

The third bike back rides in the left portion of the lane. That bike is directly behind the first bike – again spaced by a time interval. The fourth bike back, rides in the right portion of the lane directly aligned with the 2nd bike and spaced by a time interval.

This formation continues to the rear of the group where our SWEEP rider takes the last position. We try to keep our groups within the range of 10 to 14 bikes.

We use the stagger formation because it allows our groups to occupy a smaller space on the highway while allowing each bike maximum space cushion.

Key to successfully forming a stagger is the ability to establish the proper interval between bikes. If you are in any position other than lead or 2nd bike (wing) you need to establish a 2 second interval between your bike and the bike you are following. To do that, simply watch the rear tire of the bike ahead of you cross a stationary mark on the road – like an expansion strip or a pole shadow. When you see that tire cross that mark, begin counting – ***“one one-thousand, two one-thousand”*** “ When you finish saying that, your front tire should cross the mark. If so, you are following at the proper distance.

If you are riding the wing or 2nd bike, your task is slightly more difficult as you have a 1 second space to maintain from the lead bike. You count – ***“one one-thousand”*** and cross the mark.

IT'S NOT HARD BUT IT'S NOT EASY EITHER. All it takes is practice and a little attention. There are a few traps to avoid and a few tips to remember.

1. Count out loud – not in your mind.
2. Don't try to establish a visual reference for the distance as the distance changes with speed – that's why we use time.
3. Don't lock your vision on the bike in front of you.
4. Unless you are bike #2, don't try to time off of the staggered bike in front of you – use the bike directly in front.

HOWEVER (*there is always an exception*) never pass the stagger in front of you – even if that means you are too far behind the bike directly in front of you. This gets a little complicated but I'll try to explain.

If the stagger bike in front of you is allowing too much space in front of it, you are going to end up with an inordinate amount of space in front of you. AND, you will have to establish your position off that bike ("*one one-thousand*") to reestablish the group's stagger from you back. If that rider does not pick-up on the situation and correct his following distance, speak with him/her at the next stop or speak with the Lead or Sweep to get it corrected. It is always a good practice to glance at the spacing around you to assure that you are not creating a flaw in the formation.

If the stagger bike in front of you is leaving improper space, pay no attention, manage your following distance to the bike in front of you by the 2-second rule.

Why 2 seconds? You should know and here it is. It takes us humans about 1 full second to analyze a situation and get to the brake. If we have only one second or less to enact the proper maneuver (brake, swerve, etc) we will not be successful. With a 2-second interval and the space provided by the stagger, we have sufficient time and space to take successful action.

That's it – thanks for listening; now, go practice.

Mike – the safety guy.