

# SASKATOON HOG GROUP RIDING GUIDELINES



# S-HOG GROUP RIDING GUIDELINES

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Developed from document created by Thomas N. Tisch

## Safety / Risks of Group Riding

The fun and camaraderie of group riding is one of the top draws of having a motorcycle. However, it comes with risks all its own:

- Covering too much road,
- mixing riders of various skill levels,
- and general chaos.

These **guidelines** are provided to reduce the risk and limit unpredictability. Use them as guiding principles not as unbreakable dictates.

Think in terms of SAFE RIDING, while thinking of the others riding.

### **Group Riding is a discipline:**

You automatically forfeit some personal autonomy.

## Road Captains

### Categories of Road Captains:

1. **Head Road Captain**, Active (RC)
2. **Road Captain**, Active
3. **Probationary Road Captain**, in training
4. **Inactive Road Captain**, (past RCs that could be used as needed.)

Members interested in becoming a Road Captain should ask to become a Road Captain, receive training, and complete the required activities as stated below, within one year of the date of the application.

**Probationary Road Captains** are required to have a sponsor/mentor Road Captain.

**Road Captains and Probationary RCs** must plan and lead two (2) rides during each Calendar year.

When Probationary Road Captains have satisfied the required elements as stated, the Head Road Captain will make a determination if they may be promoted to Road Captain.

Road Captains should have obtained a Motorcycle Endorsement "M" on their Driver's License no less than one (1) year prior to making application for Road Captain.

Deviations to this may be made by the Head Road Captain.

## Road Captains (RC)—Roles and Responsibilities

### The Road Captain—Planning the Ride

Plan routes to predetermined destinations. It is the responsibility of the Road Captain to be familiar with the route and to have a contingency plan in the event any detour or deviation from the planned route becomes necessary.

- If distance dictates, select some rest stops and stick to the plan.
- Plan the first stop for an hour after starting (find a stop that will allow for a washroom break and refueling for those who will have forgotten to do one or the other before the start of the ride).
- When reservations to restaurants and / or lodging are necessary, the Road Captain makes sure these are completed.
- When necessary make maps and "alternate routes".

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- Consider checking the route shortly before the ride so that construction, washouts, or other unplanned obstacles could be avoided.
- Set the riding pace, look ahead for anything that could interrupt the ride, and be very familiar with navigating the route. Speed preferences should be discussed and agreed upon before the ride begins.

The Road Captain is the leader of the ride. As the leader, he or she is responsible for setting the pace of the group. The speed will generally be at or below the posted speed limit. The leader must consider several factors when setting the pace for the group:

- the number of bikes,
- the rider's skill level,
- weather conditions, and
- traffic conditions.

The Road Captain will set a slow initial pace after any stop to prevent an "accordion effect" of the group. Once the entire group is rolling, the leader will then increase speed to a safe and comfortable pace. If gaps develop within the group, the riders at the rear may have to ride a little faster to catch up. The leader will try to minimize this possibility.

### Take plenty of breaks

Group riding is a bit exhausting. To keep concentration and energy, take frequent rests.

### The Slot RC

There are critical positions in the group that should be worked by assigned Road Captains. The Slot RC Position is the second bike in the group. The Slot RC will work in concert with the Road Captain. The Slot RC maintains constant vigilance on the group to ensure that everyone has made it through an intersection, or has merged onto a highway. This allows the Road Captain to concentrate more on the route and take cues from the Slot RC as to the group's integrity.

In the event of a Road Captain leaving the group for any reason, the Slot RC will take over as Road Captain.

### The Sweep RC

There may be one or two Road Captains assigned to the Sweep RC position as the very last riders in the group. The Sweep RC riders will signal to the Road Captain that the group is ready to roll from the start location and from any intermediate stops along the route. The Sweep RC maintain the pace established by the Road Captain. No one should fall behind the Sweep RC.

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The Sweep RC advises the Road Captain if part of the group gets stuck by a light, or another vehicle gets into the group. Then also let him know when the group is back together again—that is, if they have radio contact.

The Sweep RC rider is responsible for and assists any rider that encounters problems. The Sweep RC will assist any rider that needs to pull over and should advise the Road Captain—that is, if they have radio contact. The remainder of the group will continue. If it is in the opinion of the Road Captain that the group should also pull over, they will do so at the first safe area.

If a member of the group goes down, the Sweep RC will stop ASAP to help and/or direct traffic away from the accident. No more than one other rider should stop to help the Sweep RC, as it is generally not safe for a larger group to park along the side of the road. The remainder of the group will continue. If it is in the opinion of the Road Captain that the group should also pull over, they will do so at the first safe area.

Ideally both the Road Captain and the Sweep RC will have radios and be in contact with each other.

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### Pre-Ride Responsibilities and Briefing

Just before departure for the ride, the Road Captain will brief the group to introduce the information to non-experienced riders, and to reinforce the information for the experienced riders on

- track members on the ride (sign up list), and get EMERGENCY CONTACT information for members on the ride.
- introduce the other Road Captains (Slot and Sweep)
- ride conditions,
- route, rest and fuel stops, how long you'll ride, where you'll stop,
- where to go if you get lost,
- hand signals, and
- obey all traffic guidelines and regulations,
- safety topics (rider with special concerns or needs should make them known so they may be addressed).

Find out who has the smaller gas tank in your group. The Road Captain needs to know how many miles the group can go before needing to gas up.

**If you are not a Road Captain, please turn off your passing lamps, or triple trees. The road captains use the light pattern to recognize the Sweep RCs.**

### Decide a riding order

If you have a "preferred riding location", like being on the inside or outside of the lanes, let the Road Captain know during the pre-ride discussions.

There is a diversity of opinions on where less experienced riders should be placed in the group: towards the front, in the middle, or towards the end of the group.

**For S-HOG group rides, the Road Captain should arrange riders in order of experience; less experienced riders in front, and more experienced ones in back.** This allows more seasoned riders to keep an eye on the newer riders, and give them pointers based on what they observe. With more skilled riders up front, it becomes too easy for them to ride at a fast pace, unintentionally leaving newer riders behind trying to catch up and possibly over-reaching their skill level.

Trikes and motorcycles with sidecars should ride at the rear unless they are leading the group—or other arrangements with the Road Captain are made.

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### Starting the Ride

#### YOUR Priority Must Be Safety.

Every rider in a formation should work to reduce the risk inherent in group riding. As well as thinking of your own safety, think of the group's safety.

#### Arrive Prepared.

**The first rule of group riding, start with a full tank and an empty bladder.**

**If you want to be included, get there on time.**

Bring a mobile phone. Have personal medical emergency information available.

On your smart phone consider getting the APP "**ICE Standard**" (or one like it) and having it produce your screen display.

It is advisable for riders to have a first-aid kit, bike tools, and other necessities.

If you join the group at an intermediate stop, then make sure you join with a full tank of gas **then gas when the group does**. OTHERWISE 30 minutes after the group gases up, you might find yourself low on gas. In that case, you will need to pull off the road to speak with the Sweep RC—explaining that you will be leaving the group.

#### Ride Your Own Speed

Everyone must ride their own ride, in a manner that keeps them in their comfort zone. When that speed is slower than the others ride, there's nothing to be ashamed of: everybody has different experiences.

Don't be over confident. Safety will be your primary concern for the entire ride. Do not let anyone else do your riding for you. Don't get so worked up that you go off the road in a bend! **Do not create an unsafe condition.**

Never exceed your capability or comfort zone just to keep up. If the pace is too quick for you - back off until you feel comfortable.

The group will eventually slow to your pace. There is no need to rush to avoid becoming lost or separated from the group

**Always know the others will wait for you**, so there is no need to ride faster than feels comfortable.

DO NOT ride through a **RED** traffic light. Simply stop! You should be thinking of stopping when you see a yellow traffic light.

## S-HOG GROUP RIDING GUIDELINES

### Discipline is Essential.

When riding in a group, you automatically forfeit some personal autonomy.

1. You should normally maintain your relative position within the group unless doing so would compromise safety.
2. Randomly changing positions is an indication of an undisciplined rider, increases risk for everyone else and should not be condoned.
3. There may be times when changing your position in the formation is the safe thing to do. But before you do, you should have a good reason, and it shouldn't be frequent.

**Group riding is disciplined riding**, if following the guidelines of the group is not for you then don't get in the group (instead meet everyone later at the destination).

### Keep the group to a manageable size

Ideally that would be **five to seven** riders. If necessary (over ten riders), the Road Captain will break the group into smaller sub-groups. Each group is then separated by a few seconds, each group with a RC and Sweep RC. The size of the groups will differ due to various conditions and will be determined during the Pre-Ride meeting.

The distance between two or more groups can vary depending on the type of roads, intensity of traffic, and many other factors. The groups should not ride so close to the preceding group that in fact they become one large group. There should be enough room between groups that it is obvious to other vehicles they can pass a group safely

The quantity of Road Captains will sometimes determine the number of groups. **Ideal group size for most rides will be from 5 to 7 bikes.** The larger the group the more risk there will be, and **more care** should be taken.

### Don't Go Rogue

In group riding, there's no room for show-offs or renegades. Avoid competitions, tailgating, and / or passing other riders.

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### Participating in the Ride

#### Trust Your Road Captain.

This is a two-way deal. You should trust your Road Captain and he/she must be competent to lead. A good Road Captain will account for the various bikes, experience and skill level of each rider.

#### Follow the Directions of the Road Captain.

You have chosen to participate in the ride so when the Road Captain requests you line up at a certain location in preparation for departure, do it. You should have discussed any of your little quirks at the Pre-Ride meeting. If you have a fear of riding in the right-hand side of the lane, let the Road Captain know and he will place you accordingly. If you are riding a trike, or pulling a trailer the Road Captain may want you at the rear of the group, just before the Sweep RC.

The Road Captain will signal all lane changes. The Road Captain will execute lane changes with the assistance of the Slot RC and the Sweep RC. When the lead Road Captain signals for a lane change, it does NOT mean to immediately make a move in any direction. Wait for the Road Captain to initiate the move into another lane. Follow the bikes in front of you.

Should the Road Captain miss or purposely go past a turn—members of the group should not second guess the Road Captain, or start making independent decisions. The group riders should understand that **in the interest of safety** the Road Captain will continue to a safe turn-around area. The Road Captain will not put themselves and other riders in danger. If safety considerations indicate the Road Captain may deviate from the ride plan as covered at the pre-ride meeting.

No one should pass the Road Captain without prior agreement and for a specific reason. Anyone who does pass the Road Captain, or who rides in a manner deemed unsafe by the Road Captains, may be asked to leave the group ride.

#### Each Rider Is Directly Responsible for The Rider Behind Them.

A good technique that makes it easy for the guy in front of you to see you is to position yourself so you can see his eyes in his mirror. If you can't see his eyes, he can't see you without moving his head.

The Road Captain initially sets the pace, but eventually the slowest rider should normally determine it. If everyone follows the guidelines, then speed will take care of itself.

Periodically check the riders following using your rear-view mirrors. If you see a rider falling behind, slow down so they may catch up. This enhances mutual support. If the rider behind you starts to fall back, **so should you**.

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If all the riders in the group use this procedure, the group should be able to maintain a fairly steady speed without pressure to ride too fast to catch up.

At a turn, if the rider behind you is temporarily out of sight, stop immediately after the turn (IF SAFE). This will allow the rider behind to see you and make the turn.

### Speed and Lanes.

On multilane roads, the group should strive to be in the same lane as the Road Captain. However, don't compromise safety to get there. If a car cuts into the formation, analyze the best course of action to get back in formation. Just ride it out behind the car for a while if other options aren't obvious.

Normally on major highways and interstates the Road Captain should be in what he considers to be the **safest** lane for conditions. That may be the furthest left lane going just slightly faster than the general traffic flow. Generally, the right lane has the most hazards in the form of exiting and entering cars at sometimes drastically different speeds. A middle lane also has its hazards: one is subject to vehicles on both sides, making it difficult to "isolate" the threat.

### Don't Accelerate on Straights

It is very common for riders in a group to accelerate on the straights when they notice that they get behind in corners. **Don't do that!** The corners will become more and more difficult for you if you ride that way.

### Accordion Effect

There will be an accordion-effect in the tail of a group, especially with riders in the front who accelerate on the straights: **DO NOT ride 140 km/hr to keep up.**

### Issues

If you are having any issue / problem, warn the rider behind you (**TAP ON THE TOP OF YOUR HELMET**). Then pull out of the group—the Sweep RC Rider will stop to see what the issue is.

### Pay Attention and Don't Assume.

Accidents occur during group rides where someone stops paying attention for a split second and runs into the person in front of them. **Be aware of your spacing behind the rider in front in terms of time.**

Know your own **reaction time and stopping capability** and ride accordingly.

Never assume the rider in front will continue at his current pace and never look away for any longer than an instant.

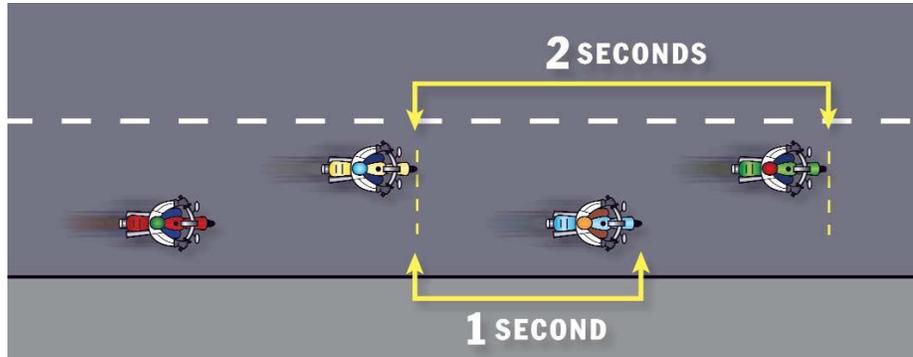
When accelerating from a stop, especially in conjunction with a turn, **don't assume the rider in front will continue to accelerate** just because his brake

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light went out and he started to roll. He could subsequently see something that causes him to stop while you are looking over your shoulder for traffic and run into him.

### The Formation

#### Staggered Riding Formation: The Two Second Rule



The Road Captain starts out in the lane's left track. The second bike is in the right track of the same lane and is only one second behind the Road Captain. Then the third rider will be in the left track of the lane, two seconds behind the Road Captain. The fourth rider is in the right track of the lane, two seconds behind the second bike, and so on down the line. Maintaining this formation, and these distances will discourage another vehicle from cutting into the group. However, if a vehicle does try to cut in between riders in the group, back off and let them in. Safety of the group is the first concern.

**When riding staggered on the left track it is a good idea to move right momentarily for on-coming traffic such as 18-wheelers.**

**Scan, just like you do when riding alone.** Don't center your focus on the bike in front of you, that creates tunnel vision and target fixation.

#### Single-file and spacing.

The Road Captain, or an individual rider, may want to go single-file on curvy or deteriorated roads, when entering the highway, when turning at intersections, or in bad weather.

**Single-file** formation is with a minimum 2-second between bikes.

One's position (formation and spacing) should be fluid and dictated by the overall situation. You might find yourself going from a close staggered to an extended single-file formation and back again.

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### Rules of the Road

#### Entering a Highway

Entering a crowded highway could also be a reason to enter "on your own" and the Sweep RCs should advise the Road Captain when the group is back together again.

#### Passing / Lane Changing

##### Single Lane Roads

When passing a vehicle on a two lane, two-way road, **each group member should pass in order and in turn**. Each rider should hold back, or pause a safe distance to the rear of the slow vehicle until the bikes in front have cleared the front of the passed vehicle before executing the pass themselves. Then each rider should promptly pass the vehicle when it is assured that there is room ahead of the passed vehicle. The Road Captain should accelerate far enough ahead of the passed vehicle to allow room for the rest of the team to pass. The Sweep RC should inform the Road Captain when he's around and back in formation (ideally the two are in radio contact). Remember, **each rider is to pass at their own risk as traffic permits!**

Use your mirrors consistently, but never rely on them. Glance over your shoulder to confirm what you think your mirror shows you.

After making your lane change, always resume the same position you occupy in the group. The same rule applies when you are passing.

##### Multiple Lane Roads

Lane changes by the group on highways with two or more lanes going in the same direction should be signaled by the Road Captain. Then one by one all the other bikes are to signal and follow the bike in front of them.

Wait to return to the original lane until the Road Captain decides when it is best to do so. Never take any action before you think it is safe! This is another lane change; follow the Road Captain in order from the front, making sure all is clear with a shoulder check.

##### Curvy Roads

On mountain type roadways and curvy roads, ride single. Allow the bike in front of you a little more room (2+ seconds), but remain as a group. Resume the staggered formation, when the road straightens out.

Do not try to out ride your riding skills. If the bike in front of you is dragging his foot pegs in the curves, you should do so only if you feel confident.

When not familiar with the road, **Slow Down**. Speed, and driver's error, are prime causes for motorcycle accidents.

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### Intersections

When an approaching vehicle is attempting a left turn, **assume** the driver does not see you and will turn directly into your path.

When first in line at a signal controlled intersection without a left turn arrow, don't wait at the white line when the light turns Green. Move forward to the approximate center of the intersection and halt with your left turn signal activated. Wait until the left turn can safely be completed. This will allow many of the group to complete a turn at the same time.

When stopping at a traffic light or stop sign, pull up and wait side-by-side. The bike on left is always first to commence moving. Each rider should move up to the intersection and personally ensure that traffic is clear: that it is safe to proceed.

Although we are riding as a "group", we are not allowed to block traffic at any time. Therefore, each rider must make a complete stop before making the turn. Once the turn has been completed, close the distance with the rider in front and re-establish the normal riding formation interval and distance.

When entering a through street, or highway, or turning at an intersection, the Road Captain should accelerate slowly until informed, by the Sweep RC, that the group is together.

### If You're Separated from the Group

If you're separated from the group, don't panic. One or two things should happen.

1. The group will slow down so you can catch up, or
2. if there is a turn ahead the rider that was in front of you should be waiting for you just after the turn, or
3. if you miss that, remember the pre-planned stops and meet there, or
4. if you have a radio and the Road Captain has a radio let him and the Sweep RC know your situation.

**Don't break the law or ride beyond your skills to catch up.**

### Stops, and Final Destination

Keep the same position during transit and after stopping for gas. Re-take that previous position so you are aware of the bikes around you.

If the Road Captain or the Sweep RC approaches you, remember; they have the group's safety and best interest at heart. Listen to what they say, you may be in their place one day, and you'll want others to listen to you. Of course, they will be the very example of tact and diplomacy, when they critique your riding skills. But listen, it just might save your life and the lives of others.

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Be ready to go when the group departs. Do all the necessary things right after you stop; don't wait until the last minute. If you want to gossip with someone, go ahead and put the helmet on and visit, but be ready to jump on the bike when the Road Captain and Sweep RCs signal.

### Parking

When entering parking areas, go to single file and slowly follow the Road Captain to the designated parking area. **Be alert!** Don't just park anywhere! If possible, park side by side. If the Road Captain does not feel that there is enough room for all bikes, he will then tell you to find your own spot. Do so carefully, especially on dirt. Watch out for cars backing up. Try to keep the group together in an orderly fashion. It really looks good when a neat formation of motorcycles comes down the highway, exits in an orderly fashion, and parks all in a row. Spectators stop and watch an orderly group enter a parking lot, close up, and park. It makes you proud to be a part of that group of motorcyclists.

If you lose control of your motorcycle while halted and it begins to fall over, don't attempt to hold it up when it goes past center. It's better to hurt your bike than to hurt yourself.

### Group Communication

Road Captains and Sweeps will be identified for each group and use electronic communication if possible. All riders in the group should be familiar with the motorcycle hand signals. Hand signals from the Road Captain should be passed down the formation by each rider.

## Hand Signals

Figure 1: Motorcycle Hand Signals

<b>MOTORCYCLE HAND SIGNALS</b>		
 <p><b>LEFT TURN</b> Arm and hand extending left, palm facing down</p>	 <p><b>RIGHT TURN</b> Arm out bent at 90° angle up with fist clenched</p>	 <p><b>STOP</b> Arm out bent at 90° angle down with palm facing back</p>
 <p><b>SLOW DOWN</b> Arm extended straight out with palm facing down while swinging arm down</p>	 <p><b>SPEED UP</b> Arm extended straight out with palm facing up while swinging arm upward</p>	 <p><b>HAZARD IN ROAD</b> On left point with left hand On right point with right foot</p>
 <p><b>FOLLOW ME</b> Arm extended straight up with palm facing forward</p>	 <p><b>COME AROUND/ TAKE THE LEAD</b> Arm extended index finger pointing out while swinging arc from back to front</p>	 <p><b>PULL OFF</b> Arm extended index finger pointing out while swinging arc from left to over head</p>
 <p><b>SINGLE FILE</b> Arm straight up with index finger pointed up</p>	 <p><b>DOUBLE FILE</b> Arm straight up with index finger and middle finger up</p>	 <p><b>RIDE STAGGERED</b> Arm straight up with index finger and pinky up</p>
 <p><b>FUEL STOP</b> Point to fuel tank</p>	 <p><b>COMFORT STOP</b> Arm extended with clenched fist with short up and down motion</p>	 <p><b>REFRESHMENT STOP</b> Fingers closed with thumb to mouth</p>
 <p><b>TURN SIGNAL ON</b> Extend arm while opening and closing hand</p>	 <p><b>POLICE AHEAD</b> Tap top of head or helmet with palm of hand</p>	

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