



Fairfax VA Chapter
Harley Owners Group®

Group Riding Handbook



Fairfax VA H.O.G.® - Group Riding Handbook

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Group Riding Overview

The goal of Fairfax Harley Owners Group #5395 (F.H.O.G.) is to build a strong and vigorous riding culture that embraces the community aspect of motorcycle group riding. It does so to enhance its members' individual riding experiences and to transform the freedom of solo riding into a shared purpose, one that builds camaraderie and increases riding skills through peer learning and turning ordinary motorcycle group riding into memorable experiences.

Group riding is the quintessential aspect of Harley Owners Group®, including F.H.O.G. It amplifies what many riders seek when on two wheels: connection, confidence, and collective safety. Group rides make individual motorcycles more conspicuous to other road users, which can reduce certain crash risks while also creating a social structure where less-experienced riders learn pacing, positioning, a hazard identification and mitigation tactics from more experienced riders.

Group riding offers an opportunity for Chapter members, both veterans and novices, to get to know each other at a personal level. Group riding also offers a sharing of knowledge about general motorcycle riding subject matters, whether that be the best roads to ride, the best practices for maintaining bike integrity, or the best places to get ice cream. Group riding is a union of various skillsets, mindsets, attitudes, and perspectives that most riders do not experience on their own.

Scope of Group Riding Handbook and Training

The F.H.O.G. motto is "Ride Safe and Have Fun." It is important to acknowledge that these are not independent concepts. They are interdependent, meaning that the Golden Rule of the Chapter is to always do both. If, however, a rider needed to prioritize only one aspect, it would be to emphasize the safety of both them and their fellow riders.

This handbook is an informative guide to assist new group riders with the minimum expectations of riding with F.H.O.G., as well as a constant reminder to the more experienced riders to ensure compliance accepted norms. This handbook is not a replacement or substitute, nor is any other group ride training materials or exercises offered by F.H.O.G., for more formal motorcycle riding training, such as those offered through the Motorcycle Safety Foundation®, Harley-Davidson® Riding Academy, or any other specialized organization that offers rider training or certification.



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F.H.O.G. Group Riding & Impairment Policies

National H.O.G.® and F.H.O.G. membership require the waiving of certain rights as a precondition of participation in Chapter events, including rides. Those specific preconditions are not covered in this handbook, but can be referenced at these links: [Harley Owners Group \(H.O.G.\) | Harley-Davidson USA](#); [Chapter Membership Enrollment Form and Release 10-30-24](#)

F.H.O.G. emphasizes the importance of being in the correct state of mind when participating in group rides, and any action that increases the risk to safety is counter to the F.H.O.G. motto of "Ride Safe and Have Fun." In a group, riders might tend to revert to how they ride when solo, especially when they experience suboptimal conditions, such as weather or traffic delays or misperceptions regarding rider strengths and/or weaknesses. Nevertheless, volunteering to participate in a group ride requires sacrificing certain freedoms. F.H.O.G. prohibits riders from relocating themselves within the group while in motion – the one exception being when filling in a vacant position (*see [Filing in a Vacant Position](#) below*). If any rider is found to be acting in such a way, or any other manner which is deemed unsafe, the Road Captain or any F.H.O.G. Officer has the authority to dismiss them from the ride.

In addition, the consumption of drugs and/or alcohol before or during a F.H.O.G. ride is grounds for expulsion from the activity, and/or potentially from the Chapter itself. Any ride considered a "destination" ride by the Road Captain is beyond the scope of this policy, as the ride – and liability for the ride – effectively ends upon reaching the destination. The awareness of such circumstances is communicated well in advance, but that does not alleviate a Chapter member from honoring the policy when joining a group ride.

All members – new or experienced – are expected to hold themselves and their fellow riders accountable, and, at a minimum, to make the Road Captain aware of any potential violation during a ride. If no Road Captains are present, members are directed to inform a Chapter Officer. If no Chapter Officers are present, members are directed to contact the Chapter Safety Officer (safety@fairfaxhog.com) and/or Chapter Director (director@fairfaxhog.com). Nevertheless, every rider is primarily responsible for their own safety and wellbeing. So even if a rider perceives violations of this policy, regardless of their validity, they can choose not to participate in a ride if they do not feel comfortable with it.



Crewmember Roles and Responsibilities

Boss Hog

A Boss Hog is the individual(s) responsible for conceptualizing, planning, coordinating, and executing upon a ride or event. Boss Hogs are the lifeblood of F.H.O.G. and it is only because of them is F.H.O.G. able to offer exciting group riding experiences to its members.

As it is not a specific riding role, there is no formal process to become a Boss Hog. Anyone can do it at any time. However, Boss Hog training can be found on the F.H.O.G. website ([Become a Boss HOG | Fairfax Chapter #5395](#)) or by contacting an Activities Officer (activities@fairfaxhog.com).

Road Captain

The Road Captain is the individual who is responsible for leading a ride. They are often also the Boss Hog, but this is not a requirement. The Road Captain is expected to know the specifics of the route, how many riders are in the group and their generalized experience levels, which aspects of the ride are likely to be more challenging than others, and leveraging ride crew members to ensure overall safety of the group.

F.H.O.G. considers a Road Captain to be a specific credential that a rider must achieve to lead rides in the Chapter. However, National H.O.G.® does not recognize such certification for H.O.G. rides. Therefore, a Chapter member is not required to become a certified Road Captain in F.H.O.G. to lead rides, though it is highly recommended. Information on becoming a Road Captain can be found on the F.H.O.G. website ([Become a Road Captain | Fairfax Chapter #5395](#)) or by contacting the Head Road Captain (headroadcaptain@fairfaxhog.com).

Wing

The Wing (or Wingman) flanks the Road Captain, functions as the Road Captain's co-pilot, and ensures group continuity by leading the riders in the #3 (Right) channel. They assist with monitoring the group, the roads and traffic, and ensuring that proper hand signals and hazard identification are promulgating throughout the group. The Road Captain's attention is focused on a myriad of other items throughout the entirety of a ride, so the Wing plays a critical role in maintaining group discipline and ensuring that the Road Captain does not become overwhelmed with other tasks.

Though the Wing role is not a specific certification, generally they are credentialed Road Captains (or, at the very least, experienced group riders). In the rare event the Road Captain must depart



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the ride before its conclusion, the Wing is expected to take over and lead the group. Hence, the recommendation for the Wing to also be a certified Road Captain.

Tailgunner

The Tailgunner is perhaps the most important crew member. They are, in effect, everyone's safety net. They are responsible for ensuring a cohesive group through the identification of risk factors that the Road Captain and/or Wing may not be aware of. The Tailgunner has the ability to "rove" and move across lanes as necessary to ensure continuity of group discipline. They are responsible for capturing lanes before the Road Captain moves the group from one lane to another, monitoring traffic, both from behind and on each side, making sure the group is maintaining proper distances, and working with the Road Captain and Wing to ensure an overall safe ride. If crew members have voice communications (e.g., CB, Bluetooth, etc.), the Tailgunner can relay necessary and/or unseen or unknown information that could help with the Road Captain's decision-making.

The Tailgunner is not a credential role separate from the Road Captain; however, all Road Captains are required to have experience as a Tailgunner (and is part of the certification process). The United States Marines have a saying, "Every Marine a rifleman." This principle underscores the belief that every Marine, regardless of their military occupational specialty (e.g., infantry, logistics, utilities, food service), should be trained as a rifleman. That same axiom is paralleled in F.H.O.G. through the dictum, "Every Tailgunner a Road Captain." Meaning, every Tailgunner should have the experience and mentality of a Road Captain, including an in-depth understanding of all the expectations listed above, when tailing a ride.

Crew Resource Management (Having a "Pack" Mentality)

Riding in a group is a specialized event through which actions are planned, practiced, and perfected over weeks, months, and sometimes even years. Some of the best Road Captains and Tailgunners still experience moments of inattentiveness or lapses in judgement. No rider is perfect, regardless of years of experience, and that is why F.H.O.G. emphasizes the team/crew approach.

Crew Resource Management was created in 1979 by NASA to investigate how human error contributed to the growing number of aviation mishaps across the country. The initial research identified that most air crashes were the result of failures of interpersonal communications, decision-making, and leadership, rather than basic equipment malfunction. Over the next decade, specific training programs were designed to mitigate human error. Basic training courses included concepts such as team building, briefing strategies, situational awareness, stress management, decision-making strategies, and breaking the chain of errors that resulted in catastrophe. It is not



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a stretch of the imagination to generalize their safety concepts and apply them to any other activity that involves humans, including riding in a motorcycle group. For more information on Crew Resource Management, read [The Evolution of Crew Resource Management Training in Commercial Aviation](#).

A terrific way to employ proper Crew Resource Management in rides is to imagine the group as a pack of wolves. To ensure survival, wolfpacks travel in highly coordinated and efficient ways. While their collective movement might appear to be straightforward, it usually involves sophisticated adaptations and is a complex interplay of social structure and environmental responses. This reflects a blend of instinct and learned strategies. When traveling, packs may be in staggered or spread-out formations depending on the terrain or other immediate needs. These arrangements facilitate scanning for potential prey or threats and aid in communication that maintains situational awareness and group cohesion. As a rule, the strongest of the wolves both forge a path at the front and provide security in the rear. The parallels with group riding should be obvious.

It is recommended that every F.H.O.G. ride should have three certified Road Captains, fulfilling the roles and responsibilities outlined above. Instances where this recommendation may not be achievable would be there are not enough certified Road Captains, or if a Road Captain-in-Training is available to fulfill a role.

Incident Management

Motorcycle riding is inherently dangerous. The number of potential threats a rider faces every time they take a bike out requires a significant degree of sensitivity and mindfulness that most other activities do not. Such threat vectors are multiplied as more riders join, and increase exponentially as additional factors, such as sudden weather changes and road closures, materialize. Therefore, F.H.O.G. follows a straightforward process by which the group can address any actualized incidents and mitigate future issues related to working one.

The F.H.O.G. Incident Management process employs an easily remembered mnemonic, **R.A.D.**, which stands for **Remain calm**; **Assess the situation**; and **Delegate**. As expressed earlier, human error is usually the primary cause of accidents. It not only causes immediate incidents but can increase the likelihood of follow-on problems. Riders often become distracted and focused on the incident instead of the road in front of them. Cohesion of group rides especially tends to break down in the event of an incident, but the most important rider to protect is yourself. You cannot assist another rider if you cannot protect yourself. By remembering R.A.D., riders will not exacerbate an already demanding situation.



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Roles During an Incident

The F.H.O.G. Incident Management process involves the assignment of specific roles and responsibilities in the event of an incident. This helps to alleviate the tendency of group riders to want to do everything all the time, prevents the wasting of critical response time, and protects those working on the incident from other threat vectors, such as oncoming traffic. There are four roles for each incident: Event Manager, Care Taker, Site Controller, and Help Seeker.

Event Manager

Coordinates the overall response effort; Collects information about the incident that may be of interest to first responders (objective facts only); Maintains overall safety of individuals working on the incident. The first rider to arrive at the scene will often be the Event Manager unless that person is not as experienced or asks another rider to take on the role. Ideally, the Road Captain would be the Event Manager. However, since most incidents occur behind them, the first rider to respond to an incident is likely one toward the back of the group. Generally, the Tailgunner will take over as Event Manager while the Road Captain leads the remaining riders to safety. Hence, another reason Tailgunners should be certified Road Captains and experienced with taking charge of a group.

Care Taker

Responds directly to the victim(s) of an incident; Assesses any injuries and provides such information to Event Manager; Ensures sterile area (keeps all other personnel away from the victim(s)); If trained in Basic First Aid, conducts proper triage of victim(s) in preparation for being relieved by first responders. The Care Taker shall be the only individual interacting with the victim(s) and should be someone willing and able to perform in such a high-stress environment. Every State in the United States has Good Samaritan Laws, meaning that group riders should not hesitate to assist a victim(s) to the best of their ability as long as such care is provided in good faith (i.e., honestly, fairly, and without the intent to harm or take advantage of someone).

Site Controller

Establishes control zones (e.g., *Exclusion Area*, *Limited Access*, *Controlled Area*); Moves all stopped motorcycles from active roadways; Sets up scouts/flaggers on all access points of an incident to control oncoming traffic; Ensures first responders have adequate access to the scene when they arrive. Ideally, the Site Controller directs others to manage oncoming traffic so they can maintain integrity of the control zones and prepares the scene to accept first responders and their



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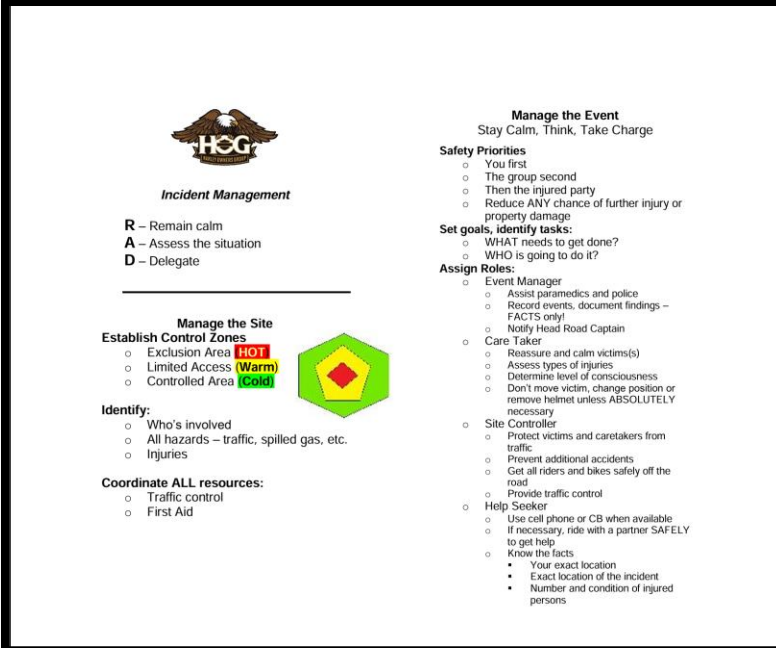
associated equipment. The Site Controller also makes sure that the victim(s) and Care Taker is not distracted by other riders.

Help Seeker

Contacts local authorities; Collects initial size up of incident from Event Manager and Care Taker to ensure critical information is relayed to appropriate authorities. The Help Seeker is the only rider authorized to depart the scene of an incident until the Road Captain deems the event resolved, and they may have to do so if they are unable to contact authorities from the scene of the incident. If necessary, a non-assigned rider will accompany the Help Seeker. Numbers are important, and the Road Captain needs to confirm the location of all group riders before departing after an incident.

Incident Management Card

F.H.O.G. provides an easily stored one-pager with the above information listed for quick reference. Every group rider should have one on their person at any time during a group ride, and ride crew members (Road Captains, Wings, and Tailgunners) are expected to have one for any ride they work. Laminated cards can be obtained by contacting the Chapter Safety Officer (safety@fairfaxhog.com) or can be downloaded from the F.H.O.G. website and either kept on an electronic device (such as a mobile phone) or printed: [Incident Management Card.pdf](#).



The Incident Management Card is a one-page reference tool for group riding incidents. It features the Fairfax H.O.G. logo at the top left. The card is organized into several sections:
1. **Incident Management**: A mnemonic 'RAD' (Remain calm, Assess the situation, Delegate) with a horizontal line below it.
2. **Manage the Site**: A section titled 'Establish Control Zones' with a diagram of three concentric hexagons labeled HOT (red), Warm (yellow), and Cold (green). Below this is an 'Identify' section with bullet points for who's involved, hazards, and injuries.
3. **Coordinate ALL resources**: A section with bullet points for traffic control and first aid.
4. **Manage the Event**: A section titled 'Stay Calm, Think, Take Charge' containing 'Safety Priorities' (You first, group second, injured party, reduce further injury), 'Set goals, identify tasks' (What needs to be done, who is doing it), and 'Assign Roles' (Event Manager, Care Taker, Site Controller, Help Seeker) with detailed sub-bullets for each role.
5. **Diagram**: A central graphic of three concentric hexagons representing the control zones.

Incident Management

R – Remain calm
A – Assess the situation
D – Delegate

Manage the Site

Establish Control Zones

- Exclusion Area **HOT**
- Limited Access **Warm**
- Controlled Area **Cold**

Identify:

- Who's involved
- All hazards – traffic, spilled gas, etc.
- Injuries

Coordinate ALL resources:

- Traffic control
- First Aid

Manage the Event
Stay Calm, Think, Take Charge

Safety Priorities

- You first
- The group second
- Then the injured party
- Reduce ANY chance of further injury or property damage

Set goals, identify tasks:

- WHAT needs to get done?
- WHO is going to do it?

Assign Roles:

- Event Manager
 - Assist paramedics and police
 - Record events, document findings – FACTS only
 - Notify Head Road Captain
- Care Taker
 - Reassure and calm victims(s)
 - Assess types of injuries
 - Determine level of consciousness
 - Don't move victim, change position or remove helmet unless ABSOLUTELY necessary
- Site Controller
 - Protect victims and caretakers from traffic
 - Prevent additional accidents
 - Get all riders and bikes safely off the road
 - Provide traffic control
- Help Seeker
 - Use cell phone or CB when available
 - If necessary, ride with a partner SAFELY to get help
 - Know the facts
 - Your exact location
 - Exact location of the incident
 - Number and condition of injured persons



Group Riding Fundamentals

As a motorcycle rider, freedom on the open road is the quintessential essence of being. Turning the throttle with the wind in your hair and the engine rumbling through the body, the motorcycle rider thrives in an environment that might seem contradictory to the principles of group riding. However, the purpose of joining a H.O.G. chapter is to ride in a group.

F.H.O.G. offers more rides each year than any other geographically approximate H.O.G. chapter. In any given year, there are over 350 riders joining over thirty-five group rides, and all do so for reasons having little to do with actual motorcycle riding. Nevertheless, to be a proficient group rider relies on recognizing the norms, rules, and best practices of group riding. At F.H.O.G., understanding and applying the group riding standards is essential in ensuring a safe but fun experience for all members.

Group Riding Preparedness

Like solo riding, group riding requires an elevated level of awareness and concentration. Unlike riding solo, however, group riding is less forgiving and has more risk factors due to the nature of being in proximity with other riders. Therefore, each rider should know their own limits and ride within them, especially when in a group. Never ride above your abilities as mistakes at the personal level could result in accidents at the group level. Riders must be physiologically and psychologically prepared before participating in a group ride.

Physiologically

Each rider should be able to identify if or when they are physically unprepared to ride. Whether they are battling an illness or injury, are tired, stressed, or lacking caloric capacity (e.g., energy), or are otherwise incapable of manipulating a 600lb. motorcycle, they should have an honest conversation with themselves about their participation in a group ride. If there are any doubts, they should omit themselves from the ride.

Psychologically

Drugs, alcohol, stimulants, depressors, and other chemical means can limit the brain's ability to rapidly respond to many of the risk factors inherent in motorcycle riding. Distractions and stress, such as ongoing familial or work issues, can have similar effects as they cloud judgement and discretion when they are needed the most. During a group ride, everyone is responsible for the



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safety and wellbeing of all other riders, and any deterioration of split-second decision-making could have tragic outcomes.

Ride Rating System

F.H.O.G. instituted a grading system to better align expected ride experiences with group riders' levels of expertise. This system helps communicate and informs all Chapter members as to the likely skill level expected of a given ride. It is important to recognize that the ratings are not intended to be exclusionary. They are simply measures through which a prospective group rider can determine their level of participation. Regardless of rating, the Road Captain will ensure that all riders have a safe and fun experience.

Basic (One-Bike)



Focused on riders with minimal group riding experience, One-Bike rides are not overly complex. They are usually limited in terms of range, duration, and technical proficiency, and emphasize a collegial approach to riding as a group.

Intermediate (Two-Bike)



Focused on a more engaging group riding experience, Two-Bike rides are a mixture of basic and advanced riders and offer a more stimulating ride. Recently experienced or seasoned group riders are the expected audience.

Advanced (Three-Bike)



Focused on more experienced riders and offering a more riveting ride experience, Three-Bike rides are longer distance, longer duration, and have significantly more technically challenging aspects. As a result, Three-Bike rides are fewer in number, as the overall riding expertise of the Chapter lends itself to One-Bike or Two-Bike rides.



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Staggered Formation

National H.O.G.® does not dictate how a Chapter conducts its group rides, but it does provide generalized suggestions. One is to always ride in a staggered formation as it gives an extra margin for safety. F.H.O.G. acknowledges this suggestion and incorporates it into its group riding protocols. Unless otherwise directed ([see Single-File Formation](#)), every F.H.O.G. ride will be in Staggered Formation. Riding in Staggered Formation is, in effect, riding offset from other riders. F.H.O.G. does not tolerate lane sharing (i.e., motorcycles abreast). Therefore, to properly ride in Staggered Formation, riders must affix themselves across two axes: location and distance.

Location

On every road there are three distinct paths, or "channels," whereby riders align themselves during a ride. Though imaginary, these channels help control rides by ensuring uniformity and compliance throughout the entire group. There are a variety of ways to describe each channel – 1, 2, 3.... Left, Middle, Right – but regardless, they are present during each ride, and every group rider is expected to abide by them.



Per the above image, channels 1 (Left) and 3 (Right) are the nominal paths of travel. Channel 2 (Middle) is free of any traffic because it offers visibility for riders at the back of the group – especially the Tailgunner – to be able to see any upcoming road conditions or potential hazards. Having this lane free also provides space for riders on either channel to take sudden avoidance

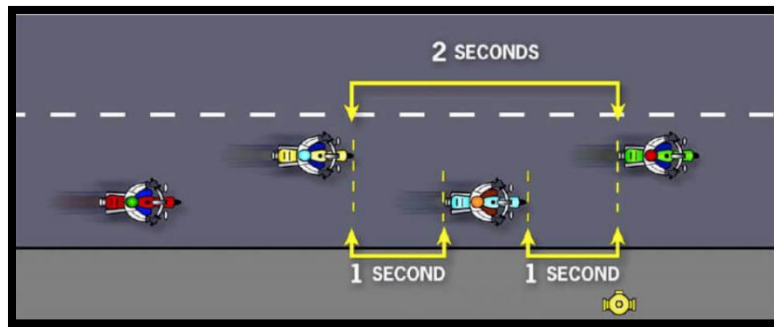


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measures. At F.H.O.G., unless it cannot be avoided, channels 1 (Left) and 3 (Right) are the default locations for group riders.

Distance

Distance (i.e., separation from other bikes) is the most crucial factor for safe group rides. The closer bikes are to one another, the more likely an individual mistake could lead to a group accident. Therefore, though a bike's location is set, its distance is continually adjusted because of ride dynamics.



In Staggered Formation, there are two distinct distances that must be adhered to. Bikes in the same channel maintain, at a minimum, a two-second separation. As the location of bikes in the other channel is offset, they should naturally fall into a one-second separation from the bike adjacent to them (either forward left/right or aft left/right). At F.H.O.G., the Road Captain leads channel 1 (Left) and the Wing leads channel 3 (right). The Wing will always offset at least one second behind the Road Captain while in Staggered Formation, and if each channel is maintaining a proper two-second separation, the one-second offset separation should come naturally.

Single-File Formation

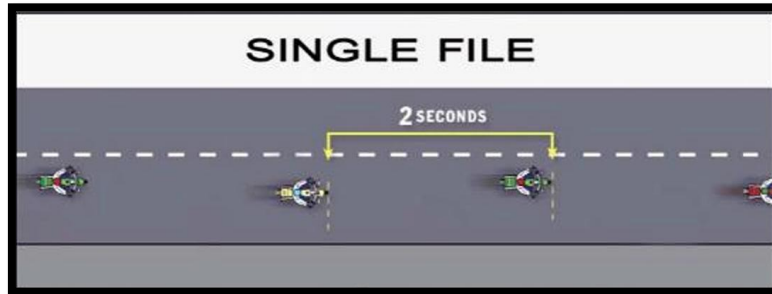
Despite its name, Single-File Formation does not involve riders lining up directly behind one another. In fact, the most recent edition of National H.O.G.'s® [Chapter Handbook](#) removed "Single-File" from its lexicon. However, as this terminology is well ingrained and understood throughout F.H.O.G., its usage will remain for the time being.

Single-File Formation is ideal for road conditions that make Staggered Formation too risky, such as through tight curves or whenever one channel is unavailable (i.e., road construction, hazards, or cyclists). The only real difference riders experience in Single-File Formation is a doubling of the minimum distances required in Staggered Formation. The location of bikes (e.g., channels) stays the same. In Single-File formation, riders within the same channel ride at a minimum four-second



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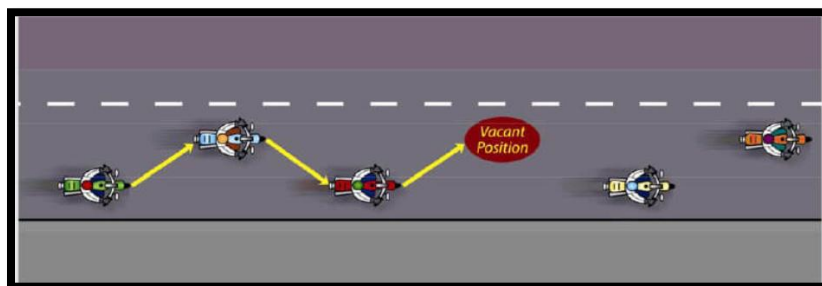
separation. Offset riders will naturally fall into a two-second separation if the Wing does so when instructed by the Road Captain.



The Road Captain may signal for Single-File Formation even if the road conditions do not necessarily warrant it. However, the purpose of Single-File Formation is to provide more space for sudden braking or maneuvering. All riders, regardless of role, skill, or position, are expected to adhere to the increased distances of Single-File Formation when instructed to do so. When coming to a stop (stop light, stop sign, pedestrian, etc.), the group will automatically revert to Staggered Formation. Upon resuming the ride, the Road Captain will re-send the Single-File Formation hand signal, if the conditions call for it.

Filling in a Vacant Position

There may be time when a rider in a group departs in the middle of the ride, leaving an opening – or vacant position – in the group. Group riders are instructed to maintain their current position, as any stoppage will reform the group back into Staggered Formation ([see Stopping at Intersection](#)). However, there may be a need to fill in the position while still in motion. At F.H.O.G., riders are prohibited from riding abreast, especially at higher speeds. If the offset rider is not expecting a rider from the other channel to pass, they could be surprised and forced into an inadvertent action that could cause an accident.





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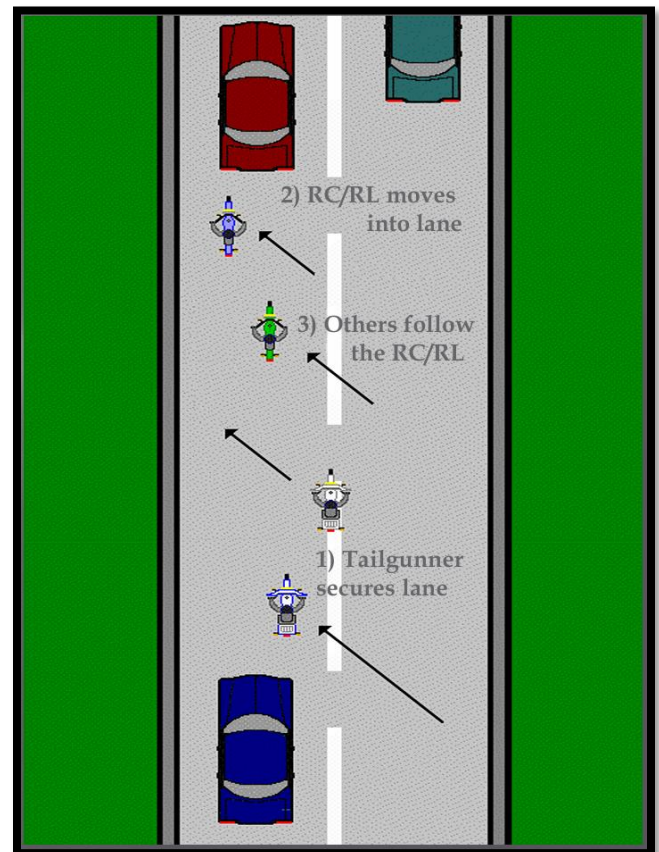
If the group finds itself in such a situation, the vacant position shall be filled in by the opposing channel. That is, rather than a rider from the same channel risking the group by passing a rider, the offset rider from the other channel should shift over and fill the vacancy. All subsequent riders should follow suite, in effect "zippering" the opening closed.

Changing Lanes

There will come a time when the group needs to change lanes during a ride. It may be for the sake of avoiding upcoming road hazards/closures or simply passing a slow-moving vehicle. Lane changes should only be conducted when there is more than one lane. Unless conditions permit it, F.H.O.G. does not recommend changing lanes on one-lane roads (i.e., passing via oncoming traffic lane).

The Road Captain and Tailgunner administer the lane change together. The Road Captain will signal their intention to change lanes. Upon receiving the signal, the Tailgunner will safely "capture" the other lane. Once the Road Captain has deemed it safe to do so, they will give the proper hand signal and move to the other lane. Each subsequent rider, starting with the Wing, will follow suit. This is the serpentine method of changing lanes, and though there are other methods, it is the only one F.H.O.G. practices. Nevertheless, each rider is responsible for

checking their mirrors and ensuring their own safety before changing lanes.

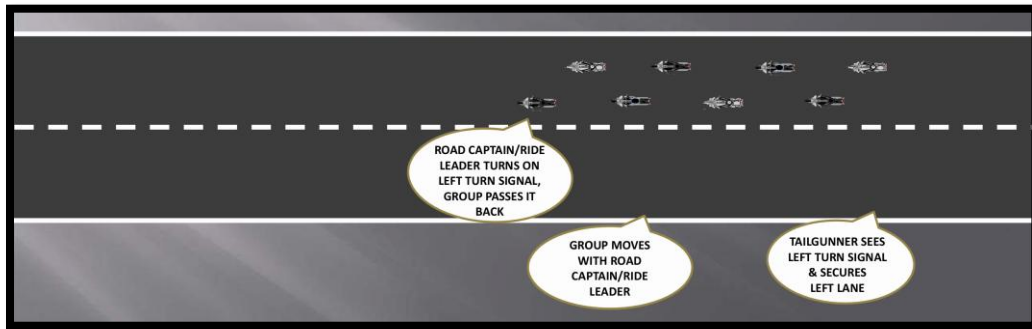


Group Lane Change to the Left

Lane changes to the left are easier as the Road Captain can see if there is any traffic preventing the group from moving over.



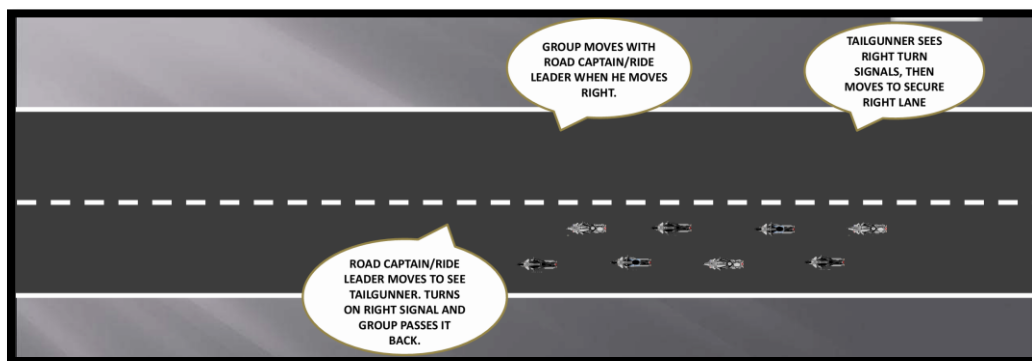
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1. Road Captain makes clear their intent to change lanes via turning on their left blinker; group riders follow suit and turn on their left blinkers.
2. Tailgunner acknowledges the Road Captain's intent and moves to capture the left lane whenever it is safe to do so.
3. Road Captain confirms Tailgunner has captured the lane and that there is no traffic preventing lane change, provides proper hand signal, and moves to the left lane.
4. Riders check their mirrors and move to the left lane as safely as possible via the serpentine method.

Group Lane Change to the Right

Lane changes to the right are more difficult as the Road Captain is prevented from seeing the right lane. Therefore, the Road Captain will work with the Wing to ensure visibility before conducting a lane change.



1. Road Captain makes clear their intent to change lanes via turning on their right blinker; group riders follow suit and turn on their right blinkers.
2. Tailgunner acknowledges the Road Captain's intent and moves to capture the right lane whenever safe to do so.



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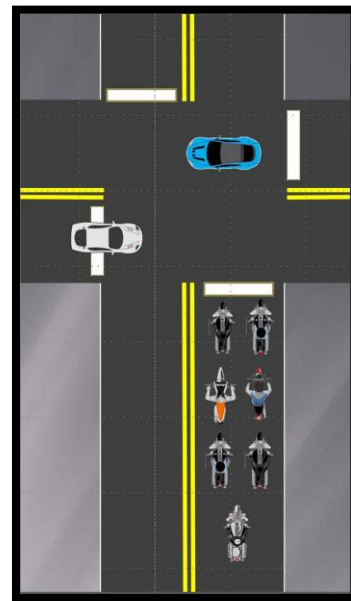
3. Road Captain gives [Hold Position](#) signal to group and moves over to channel 3 (Right) so they can see the right lane. Once they confirm that the Tailgunner has captured the lane and there is no traffic preventing lane change, the Road Captain provides proper hand signal and moves to the right lane.
4. Riders check their mirrors and move to the right lane as safely as possible via the serpentine method.

Stopping at Intersection

Navigating an intersection while on a group ride is fraught with risk as it upsets the harmony of the group by potentially breaking it up. F.H.O.G. expects its group riders to abide by the traffic laws of whatever municipality the group may be riding in, meaning that all bikes shall stop at stop lights and stop signs. In a group ride, this can result in other traffic affecting group formation and/or cohesion.

Regardless of formation, whenever they come to a stop, the group will automatically align side-by-side. Doing so condenses the spread of the group and allows for more efficient continuation of the ride upon departing the intersection. When legally allowed to do so, the first two bikes will depart the intersection, with the Wing following the Road Captain at a one-second interval (i.e., will not depart the stop side-by-side). All subsequent bikes will stop if

required, first ensuring the intersection is clear, and departing in the same fashion. The Road Captain will ensure all bikes have cleared the intersection and regrouped appropriately before commencing the continuation of the ride.



Departing from a Stoplight and Four-Way Stop

Motorcycles, like other vehicles, are expected to follow all traffic laws. Whenever the group stops at either a stop light or a stop sign, each rider is responsible for adhering to the laws and riding safely. Just because the bike in front went through the intersection does not mean the intersection is clear. Each rider must do an assessment of the situation before entering the intersection.



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When entering a four-way stop intersection, the Road Captain will wait for all riders to regroup before going through. There might be a tendency to depart before the group has been reformed; however, as safety is paramount, the Road Captain will only move when they have deemed it safe to do so.

Group Parking

A critical aspect of safe group riding is proper group parking. This is not only about where to park, but how to park – and how to do it safely but quickly. Improper group parking could inadvertently put others in the group at risk, especially if it is a larger group and/or the group is exiting a high speed trafficway.

The Road Captain and Tailgunner are responsible for briefing the group on expected locations and procedures for parking during a ride, but each rider is responsible for ensuring their ability to manipulate their motorcycle in sometimes awkward situations or positions. Some rides will unavoidably meet with gravel parking lots or steep inclines. The Road Captain will do their best to avoid such circumstances, but every rider should be aware of how to properly park their bike during a group ride. The most important thing to remember is to get out of the trafficway as soon as possible. Slow or poor group parking practices could result in riders being completely stopped on a highway with oncoming traffic bearing down upon them.

Fueling at Rest Stop

At F.H.O.G., the default refueling practice is to park first, then fuel up. Meaning, the Road Captain will bring the group into a gas station and ensure everyone has safely parked before giving the signal to refuel. This ensures several important concepts: 1) All riders are present and accounted for; 2) Riders are not having difficulty parking; and 3) All other traffic at the gas station has been given time to recognize the riders and a chance to steer clear of the group. Unless otherwise directed, all group riders shall abide by the Road Captain's directions when arriving at a gas stop.



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Hand Signals

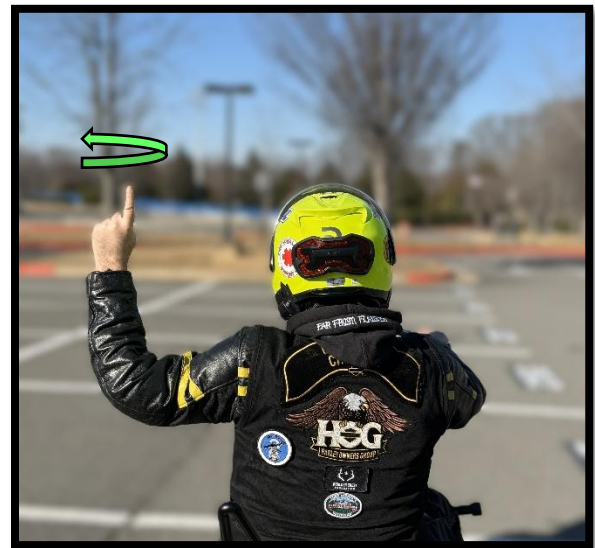
It is supremely difficult to conduct a fun and safe group ride without the proper use of hand signals. This means not only using the correct hand signals to transmit direction, but to do so in a timely manner that allows the group to recognize the signal, understand its intention, and in turn, continue passage of the signal to the rest of the group. Not allowing enough time for riders to do these key three steps could result in improper, incorrect, or incomplete signals.

The goal of hand signals is to enhance the safety of the group ride, which thereby enhances the ride experience itself. Though Road Captains are responsible for sending hand signals back, each group rider is responsible for identifying what they are and what they intend to communicate, otherwise subsequent riders may not fully grasp ride expectations.

There are a variety of hand signaling methods within the group riding community, but it is important to recognize that National H.O.G.® does not prescribe a specific technique or procedure. Each Chapter can define their own hand signals as they see fit. Nevertheless, the foundation of F.H.O.G.'s hand signals come from the best practices of the Motorcycle Safety Foundation®. All signals, unless explicitly stated, are to be passed back by all riders in a group.

Start Engines / Get Ready to Go

One finger pointing up (right or left hand) with the arm rotating around an axis. The Road Captain provides this signal to indicate to the group that departure is imminent.

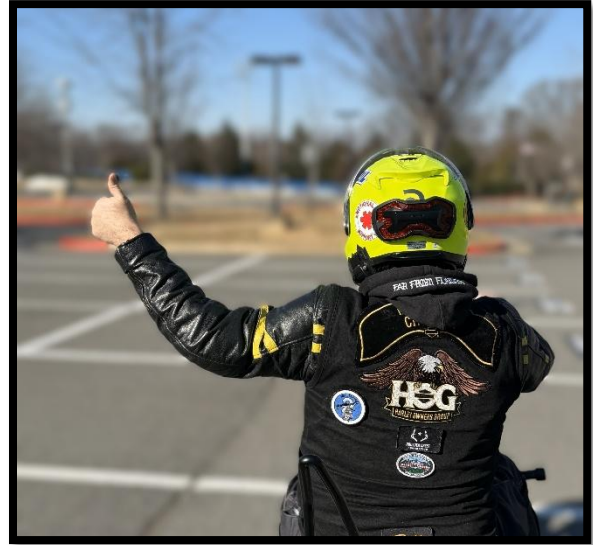




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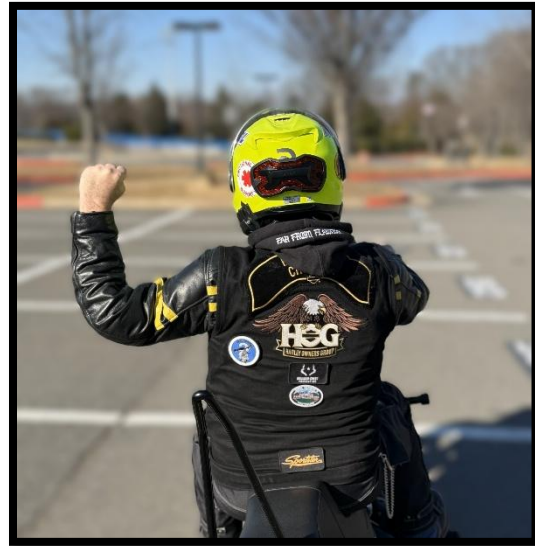
Ready to Go

Outstretched arm with thumbs up. This is the only ask-response signal whereby the Road Captain seeks a response from each rider in the group that is prepared to depart.



Right Turn

Left arm raised at a 90° angle from the body with the hand in a fist. The Road Captain provides this signal to indicate an upcoming right turn.





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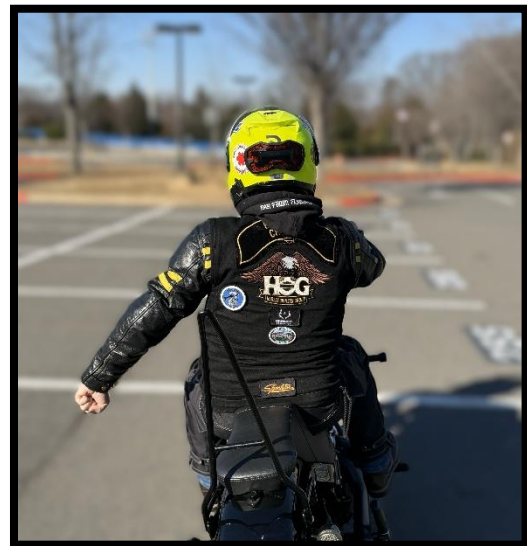
Left Turn

Left arm extended to the left at a 180° angle from the body with the hand stretched out with fingers together. The Road Captain provides this signal to indicate an upcoming left turn.



Hold Position

Left arm extended to the left at a 210° angle from the body with the hand in a fist, palm toward the aft. The Road Captain provides this signal to indicate that the group is to hold their current position. It is mostly used when the Road Captain needs to shift over to channel 3 (Right) before changing lanes.





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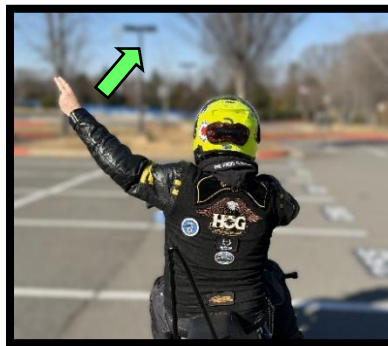
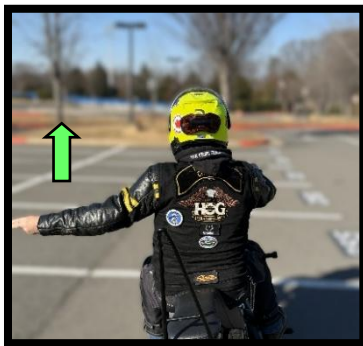
Change Lanes

Large, smooth, sweeping action by the left arm to either the left or the right. The Road Captain provides this signal to change lanes. Note: This is the only hand signal that is not passed back by the rest of the group. The Road Captain is the only rider performing this signal, as every other rider should maintain hands-on control as much as possible during this event.

Lane Change to the Left



Lane Change to the Right

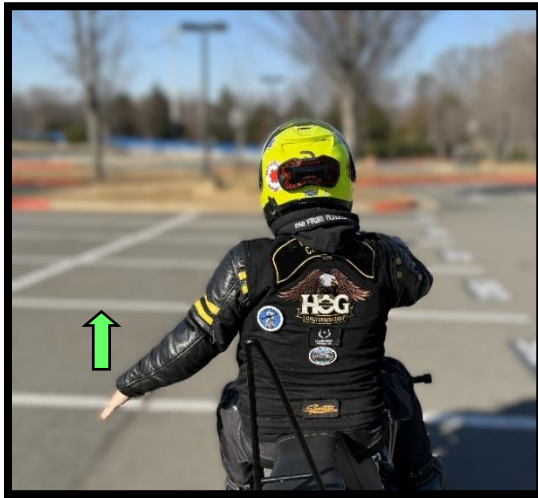




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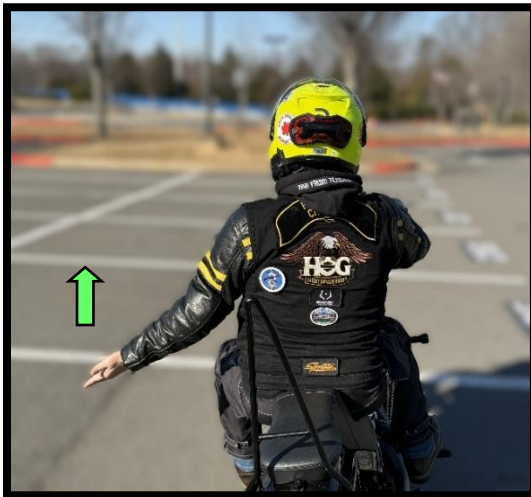
Slow Down

Left arm extended to the left at a 210° angle from the body with the palm of the hand facing downward, moving up and down at a smooth pace. The Road Captain provides this signal to indicate the need to reduce speed. Generally, this is when entering a lower speed zone, such as a downtown corridor or school zone.



Speed Up

Left arm extended to the left at a 210° angle from the body with the palm of the hand facing upward, moving up and down at a smooth pace. The Road Captain provides this signal to indicate the need to increase speed. Generally, this is when entering a higher speed zone, such as when departing a downtown corridor or school zone.

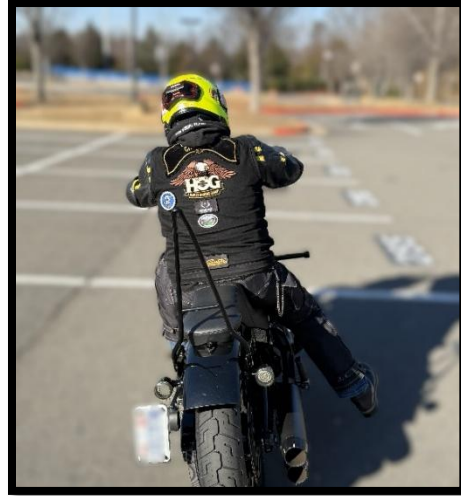
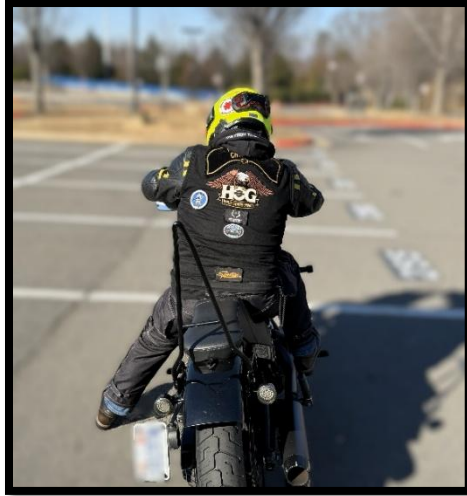




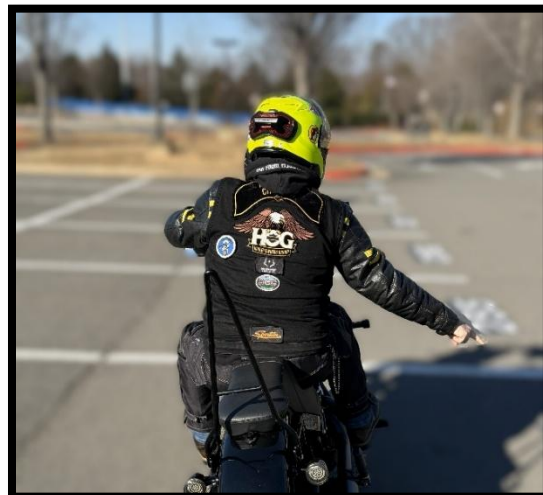
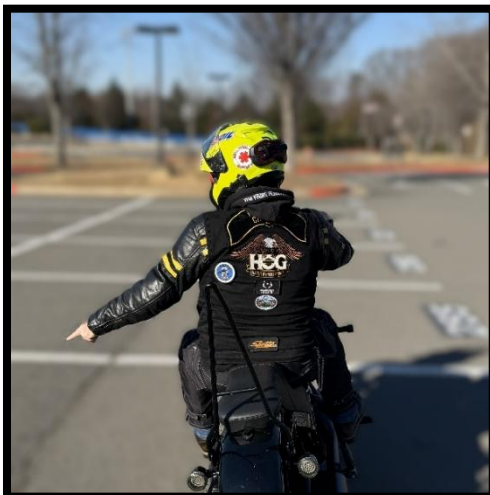
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Hazards

Option A: Extend right or left leg and point with the heel to which side of the channel the upcoming hazard is. This signal should be used as you come up to the hazard, as providing it too soon could disrupt group cohesion.



Option B: Extend right or left arm and point with the finger to which side of the channel the upcoming hazard is. This signal should be used as you come up to the hazard, as providing it too soon could disrupt group cohesion. Use this option if either 1) unable to extend your leg or 2) are riding on a trike (i.e., rear wheels prevent riders from seeing the legs of trike riders).



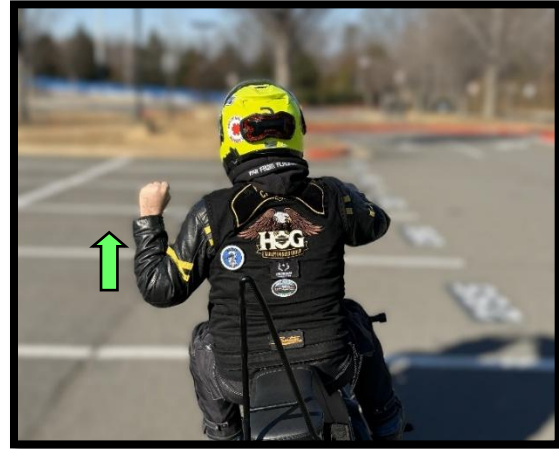
Either way, only point to hazards which affect your respective channel. Pointing at hazards on the opposite channel could disrupt group cohesion.



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Tighten Up

Left arm raised at a 90° angle from the body with the hand in a fist, moving up and down at a smooth pace. The Road Captain provides this signal when group cohesion breaks down and needs to be reformed but could also send this signal in preparation for conducting a lane change or when coming to a streetlight. Using this signal does not alleviate the distance rules described earlier (*see* [Distance](#)).



Staggered Formation

Left arm raised straight up from the body with the left hand showing the index and pinky fingers extended. The Road Captain provides this signal to indicate returning to the default riding formation, Staggered, and is done after departing Single-File Formation.

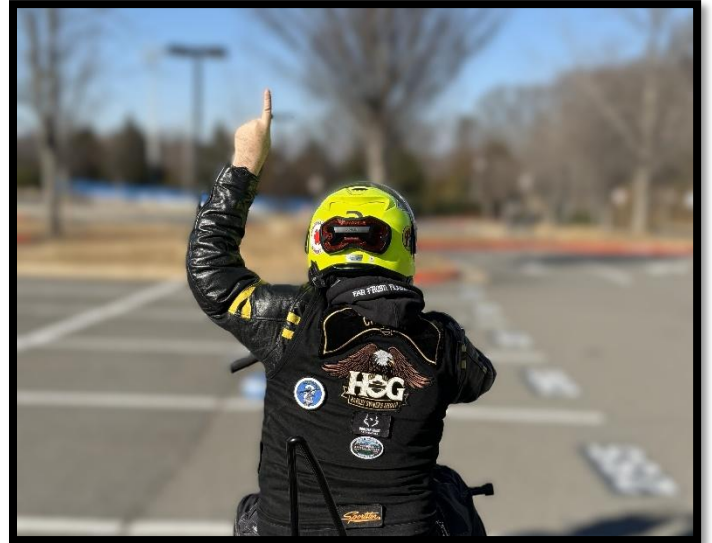




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Single-File Formation

Left arm raised straight up from the body with the left hand showing just the index finger extended, slightly over the helmet. The Road Captain provides this signal to indicate the need to resort to Single-File Formation.



Railroad Tracks / Cross-Channel Hazards

Left arm extended to the left at a 210° angle from the body with the hand stretched out, palm toward the aft, moving in and out by bending out the elbow at a smooth pace. This signal can be used by any rider to indicate either the presence of railroad tracks or a hazard(s) which affects the entire lane (i.e., all channels). This signal should be used as you come up to the tracks or hazard(s), as providing it too soon could disrupt group cohesion.

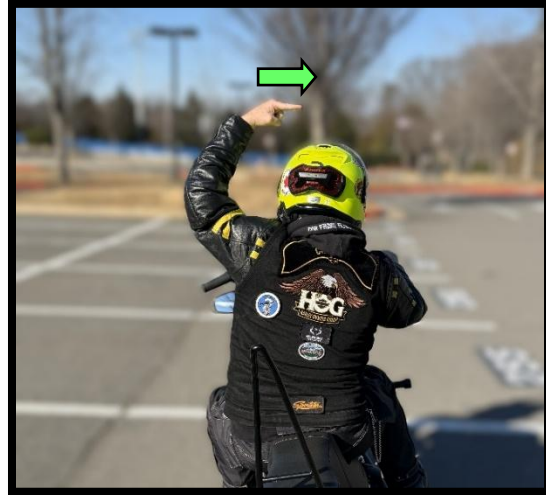
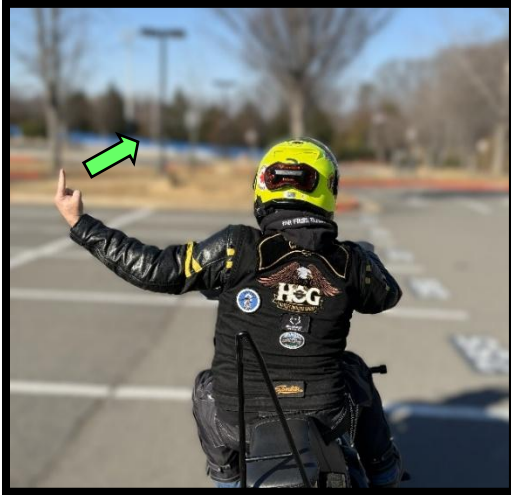




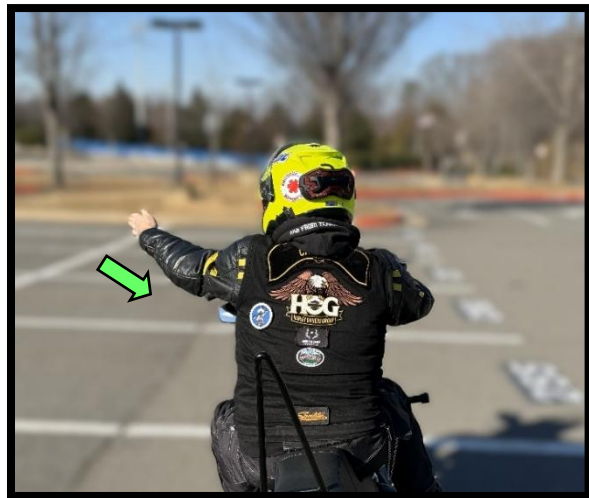
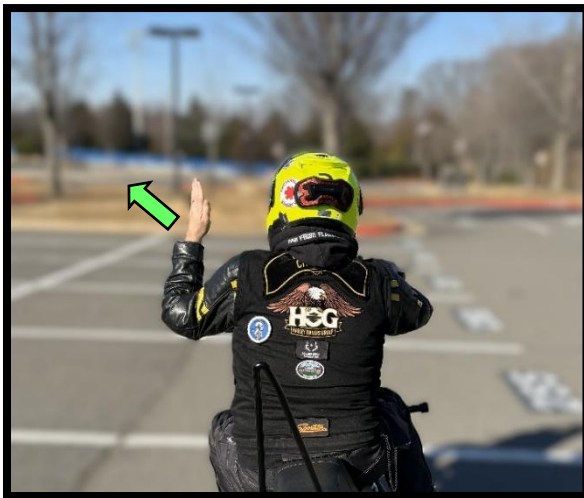
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Risk Identifiers

For path-of-travel lane risks, left arm and index finger extended over the head, moving in and out by bending out the elbow at a smooth pace.



For oncoming lane risks, left arm extended and hand stretched out with fingers together, and arm moving in and out by bending out the elbow at a smooth pace.



This signal can be provided by any rider and is used to point out risks or hazards that indirectly affect the group. Examples include cars stalled on the side of the road, cyclists, wildlife, or other factors not addressed by any of the hazard identification signals described earlier.



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Tap Out

Raise your arm over your head and tap on your helmet several times. This signal can be provided by any rider and is used to indicate that a rider desires to depart from the group. If a rider pulls to the side of the road during a group ride, the Tailgunner will pull over with them. Providing the Tap Out signal and subsequent thumbs up indicates the rider's intention to leave the ride but that they are safe and capable of doing so without any assistance.



Voice Communications

Prior to advanced technology that allowed voice communication during a ride, hand signals were the only method by which to communicate with other riders. As this method is not dependent upon signal strength, battery life, or geographic proximity, it remains the default communication mechanism in F.H.O.G. Therefore, regardless of voice communications capabilities, every Road Captain shall use hand signals on a ride, and every group rider is required to pass the hand signals back.

Nevertheless, voice communication technology has advanced to the point where group riders can take advantage of it. Currently, there are two primary technologies by which F.H.O.G. group rides communicate: Citizen Band, or CB, and Bluetooth/*Mesh*. Both methods have pros and cons, which will not be discussed in detail in this handbook, but it is important to acknowledge the role that increasingly more capable technology has in the hands of increasingly more proficient group riders.

F.H.O.G. is dedicated to expanding on the role that such technology plays during its group rides and is investigating the development of voice communication standards, but voice communication technology remains an optional component of group riding in the Chapter.




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Pre-Ride Safety Briefing

Before every group ride, F.H.O.G. requires that the Road Captain conduct a formal safety briefing. This briefing is designed with the newest rider in mind as it does not gloss over information simply because of the assumption that everyone in the group has been through it before. Often, rides will have new Chapter members who have yet to experience an F.H.O.G. group ride. Therefore, the pre-ride safety briefing speaks to them about what is expected and how they can get the most from the group ride experience.

Every certified Road Captain is provided with a physical copy of a briefing card (see below), but a digital version can be found online for anyone's reference ([Road Captain Materials | Fairfax Chapter #5395](#)). Just as every Road Captain shall review and discuss the items on the card before each ride, every group rider is expected to ask questions or seek clarity before they participate in the ride. Many of the safety mechanisms employed by F.H.O.G., including the *Road Captain Pre-Ride Briefing*, are designed to reduce the risk vectors of a ride, but cannot eliminate them all. Every rider is responsible for their own safety and wellbeing, and it is incumbent upon them to determine their level of comfortability with a ride.

Road Captain Pre-Ride Briefing	Road Captain Pre-Ride Briefing
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Does anyone need gas or to use the restroom? Is anyone still in break-in period (bike or self)? Is anyone new to FHOG? Does anyone have medical training? Explain Wing's job – leads right channel, keeps group in formation during staggered/single-file, second pair of eyes. Explain Tailgunner's job – secures adjacent lanes for either lane changes or converging lanes, checks on bikes that drop out, overall safety perspective of group. Let a crew member know if you're going to depart before destination. Obey all traffic laws. Don't run red lights or stop signs. If we get broken up, we'll wait for you. When arriving at gas stop, pull in, park, and then wait for my signal to refuel. <u>Drug/alcohol consumption and relocation within the group is explicitly prohibited.</u> [Other comments specific to the ride – route, destination, pre-ride findings, etc.] Comments from the Tailgunner and/or Wing. Go over hand signals (see back.) Review voice communications operations (CB/Sena, etc.) Any questions? 	<p><u>Hand Signals</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start Engines / Get Ready to Go Ready to Go Right Turn Left Turn Hold Position <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Used whenever the RC needs to maneuver but does not want the group to follow suit (i.e., during lane changes). Change Lanes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This signal <u>does not get passed</u> by the rest of the group, RC usage only. After seeing signal, check mirror(s) before changing lane. Slow Down Speed Up Hazards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only point at hazards that affect your respective channel; do not provide too soon. Tighten Up Staggered Formation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 secs from bike in front, 1 sec from bike offset. Single-File Formation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 secs from bike in front, 2 secs from bike offset. Railroad Tracks / Cross-Channel Hazards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not provide too soon. Risk Identifiers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Path-of-travel lane risks. Oncoming lane risks. Tap Out
<p>Important Cell Phone Numbers</p> <p>Head Rd. Capt: 785-608-9317 – Safety Officer: 210-313-3996 Director: 703-915-0203 – Asst. Director: 517-410-4169</p> <p>Fairfax VA Chapter Harley Owners Group®</p> 	



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Chapter Forms

To join F.H.O.G., each member is required to sign a *Chapter Membership Enrollment Form and Release*. This form initiates a member into F.H.O.G., but also serves as legal protection for the Chapter, and its Officers, should an incident occur during a Chapter event. National H.O.G.®'s updated [Chapter Handbook](#) revises the way in which this "waiver" is administered by the Chapter. Historically, National H.O.G.® required a *wet signature* (e.g., signed waiver) at the outset of every Chapter event or ride. This was a time-consuming effort that was not always conducive to an engaging group ride experience. The new process no longer requires a wet signature before every ride; however, F.H.O.G. does require that each rider "check-in" before each ride.

The check-in process is handled through a mobile phone application that F.H.O.G. Officers and Road Captains have access to. Before a ride departs, the Road Captain utilizes the application to validate three critical data points:

- National H.O.G.® membership
- F.H.O.G. membership
- Signed waiver

National H.O.G.® membership is handled by the individual riders themselves through interaction with their respective H.O.G. identification and account, F.H.O.G. membership is handled via payment to the Chapter, and the signed waiver is handled by the rider. If any of these three criteria are not met, the rider is barred from joining the group ride.

There is, however, a workaround. Completion, including signature, of the [Chapter Event Release Form for Adults](#) will allow a rider to join a group ride despite not having all three criteria above fulfilled. This, in effect, treats them as a "guest" of the Chapter. A caveat though is that guests cannot outnumber Chapter members on a group ride. Nevertheless, Road Captains are instructed to always have physical copies of this form on them in the event a rider cannot be officially checked in for a ride. These forms are mostly used for group rides in which non-F.H.O.G. members are participating but also serve to alleviate any active Chapter member issues related to data currency.

The Chapter also maintains a variety of other forms, which are generally the purview of Officers and Road Captains, but are unlikely to be experienced by the general rider. A full listing of the forms can be found on the Chapter website: [Forms and Documents | Fairfax Chapter #5395](#).



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Referential Information

This handbook, as well as all other policy or training materials, will be located on the F.H.O.G. Chapter [website](#).

The handbook is a product of all the F.H.O.G. Officers, but feedback or commentary on its content can be directed to headroadcaptain@fairfaxhog.com

Contact information for F.H.O.G. Officers can be found here: [Chapter Officers | Fairfax Chapter #5395 | Fairfax Virginia | H.O.G.](#)

Significant portions of this handbook was inspired or influenced by the National H.O.G.® [Chapter Handbook](#) and the [Motorcycle Safety Foundation](#)®.