SAFETY SUMMIT 2025 – SUMMARY REPORT

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Overview of Safety Concepts Reviewed

On December 13, 2025, the F.H.O.G. Safety Officer held a safety meeting to review the 2025 riding season. Attendees were asked to keep an open mind when confronted with potentially difficult discussion topics and were expected to provide direct and objective feedback. Such feedback was used to generate the list of recommendations at the end of this document.

The summit opened with a review of the Swiss Cheese Model, emphasizing the systemic nature of accidents and the necessity of layered defenses. Discussion focused on the identification of hazards, structured risk assessment, and the integration of those assessments into operational decision-making.

Key risk dimensions discussed included:

- **Likelihood/Frequency**: The probability of a hazard materializing.
- **Impact Severity**: The potential "blast radius" of an event (individual vs. group impact; single vs. multiple motorcycles; localized vs. dispersed effects).
- **Risk Interdependencies**: The potential for a single hazard to cascade into multiple direct or indirect risks.

A video-based Chernobyl simulation was used to illustrate uncontrolled chain reactions, reinforcing the importance of understanding thresholds, feedback loops, and controls designed to prevent system failure (e.g., critical mass management).

The group also reviewed **Active Failures** and **Latent Conditions**, with emphasis on moving beyond surface-level causes. Discussion highlighted how unsafe acts are often shaped by preconditions, inadequate supervision, and organizational influences rather than individual behavior alone.

The Chernobyl simulation, discussion on Active Failures and Latent Conditions, and Swiss Cheese Model, are all concepts through which illumination of a layered approach to risk management remains critical to safe motorcycle riding.

2025 Pain Points

The Safety Officer identified specific pain points prior to the safety summit, with each discussed by the group and mitigation tactics brainstormed and documented. Additional pain points were identified and subsequently discussed as well, listed in the **Emerging Considerations** section below.

1. Inadequate Following Distances

Riders frequently failed to maintain prescribed spacing—1-2 seconds in staggered formation and 2-4 seconds in single-file—particularly during transitions between formations.

Mitigations:

- Reinforce spacing standards during chapter meetings and pre-ride safety briefings.
- Train riders on practical techniques (e.g., “One-One Thousand” count and mirror reference methods).
- Empower Road Captains and Tailgunners to provide real-time corrective feedback during rides.

2. Inconsistent and Delayed Hand Signals by Road Captains

Hand signal usage varied between rides and was often initiated too late to allow acknowledgment, understanding, and relay through the group.

Mitigations:

- Standardize hand signals across the chapter.
- Conduct regular training and practice, including live demonstrations during meetings and safety briefings.
- Incorporate hand-signal proficiency into Road Captain certification requirements.

3. Failure to Relay or Accurately Replicate Hand Signals by Group Riders

Signals initiated by the RC frequently did not reach the Tailgunner or were distorted during relay.

Mitigations:

- Reinforce standardized signals and require periodic skill refreshers.
- Develop and distribute improved group-riding reference materials.
- Dedicate additional chapter time to structured group riding education.

4. Incomplete or Omitted Pre-Ride Safety Briefings

Despite the availability of a “Road Captain Pre-Ride Briefing” card, briefings were often incomplete or omitted altogether.

Mitigations:

- Provide a digital version of the briefing card on the FHOG website for immediate access.
- Encourage experienced riders and officers to ensure briefings are conducted.
- Use post-ride surveys to assess whether ride execution aligned with pre-ride expectations.

5. Deviation from Established Ride Ratings

Ride ratings intended to communicate required skill levels were not always respected, resulting in mismatched rider expectations and abilities.

Mitigations:

- Collect post-ride feedback to compare perceived difficulty against advertised ratings.
- Increase officer and Head Road Captain presence on rides to monitor alignment and intervene when necessary.

6. Emerging Considerations for Further Discussion

- ***Progression Path for Rider Development***
  The current structure lacks a formal mechanism to help riders progress from lower- to higher-rated rides, potentially creating unintentional segmentation within the chapter.
- ***Integration of Trikes into Group Rides***
  Anticipated increases in trike participation introduce unique visibility, signaling, lane-occupancy, and handling considerations.

Recommendations for Continuous Improvement

- ***Honest Self-Assessment Culture***
  Riders should critically evaluate their own skills and preparedness before participating in rides or offering feedback to others.
- ***Post-Incident Reintegration Process***
  Establish a formal process to support riders following an incident, with emphasis on rebuilding confidence and safely returning to group riding.
- ***Communications and Technology Training***
  Implement structured training for communication devices and chapter technologies to reduce delays and recurring setup issues.
- ***Member Mentorship / Shadow Program***
  Pair new members with experienced riders to guide onboarding, reinforce group-riding fundamentals, and provide individualized support.
- ***Road Captain Mentorship Program***
  Formalize a standardized mentorship and training pathway for prospective Road Captains to ensure consistent preparation, evaluation, and certification.

Conclusion

The issues identified are less about individual error and more about system design, training consistency, and enforcement of established controls. Addressing these gaps through standardized procedures, mentoring, and continuous feedback loops will significantly reduce risk and enhance overall ride safety.

Case Study Review (October 2025 Incident)

A structured review of the October 2025 incident, in which a rider misjudged a curve, crossed the oncoming traffic lane, and impacted a guardrail, identified multiple contributing risk factors:

- **Disorganized Group Formation**
  The group departed the fuel stop without a clearly defined order. Several riders overtook others to reestablish perceived positions, increasing exposure to collision risk.
- **Unsolicited Instruction by Non–Road Captain (RC)**
  Feedback was provided by a non-RC rider to the rider in question. Designated Road Captains or ride crew members should exclusively deliver instruction and corrective guidance to ensure consistency and authority.
- **Inexperienced Wingman Assignment**
  Best practice dictates that a qualified RC serve as Wingman. In this case, an inexperienced group rider filled the role during a complex ride configuration (nominally a two-bike ride, effectively ridden as a three-bike ride). Limited situational awareness and failure to identify excessive speeds and spacing deficiencies increased overall risk.
- **Limited Route Familiarity by Road Captain**
  The RC demonstrated insufficient familiarity with the route and road conditions relative to the pace ultimately maintained. This mismatch between communicated expectations and actual execution introduced unnecessary exposure.
- **Excessive Speed on Adverse Road Conditions**
  Sustained speeds exceeding 60 mph on wet, narrow, and highly curved West Virginia roads—posted at 45 mph—significantly reduced margins for error.
- **Improper Formation Selection**
  Maintaining a staggered formation on one-lane, twisty, and wet roads contradicted best practice, which favors single-file riding under such conditions. Combined with elevated speeds, this resulted in degraded spatial awareness. As noted by the rider involved in the incident: *“I was so focused on staying in staggered [formation] that I didn’t judge the turn correctly.”*
- **Ineffective Communication Between RC and Tailgunner**
  Due to technical and/or procedural issues, communication between the RC and Tailgunner was inadequate. Effective communication could have surfaced several of the above risk factors earlier and enabled corrective action.