

## Group Riding

Well, now that Spring has sprung, this has kicked off our riding season once again. It's also kicked off the rally season for us. People have their favorite rally they like to go to, and for X2, Tennessee's Spring Fling is one of them. There will be several groups heading down to Pigeon Forge at various times. This will mean several groups. At Safety Sunday Bud Rahe put on a very nice presentation on group riding, plus he & Peggy have presented it to X2 at our gathering. I won't go in to all the nuts and bolts on group riding, but feel this is a good time to remind us of a few things.

Why do we ride in a group? Well, for one, it's kind of fun, but more importantly it's a safe way to travel long distances. In case of a mechanical problem, or an accident, help is available. A group is more visible to other motorist. It also makes it a little easier for the motorist to predict what the motorcyclist will do. That's why it's important to follow some simple guidelines when riding in a group. I can't stress enough the importance of a role the lead bike, and tail bike (tail gunner) play. Your group should ride in unison. When the lead bike wants/needs to change lanes, he or she will call back to the tail gunner to secure the lane. Once that is done, then the command to look then move will be given, and the group should move all at once. When done properly, it's a thing of beauty. If the situation arises where the group can't change lanes at the same time, then you'll here the command to go as you can, or on your own. Remember, let that tail gunner secure the lane, then change lanes as a group on command. I've driven down the road when there was a "gang" of bikes in various lanes, and riding very unpredictably. It's very dangerous riding that way as the freeway turns in to a free for all. Not only that, you're likely to get the motorist upset, and road rage can start to come in to play. There is a difference between "group" riding, and "gang" riding. It's also important to keep the group pretty tight. You should have a 2-second distance between you and the bike in front of you. That would make it a one-second distance between you and the bike in the opposite track in front of you. You'll want to give yourself a little more distance if it's raining though.

That pretty much describes expressway riding, but we also ride the back roads as a group. For many of us, these are unfamiliar back roads, so caution should be used. For the most part we ride staggered. A reason for that is in the event for emergency breaking, you'll have a good chance to stop before climbing up the back end of the bike in front of you. Last year was a good example of why staggered riding is good. We were riding along enjoying the scenery when all of a sudden a dog came out of no where in front of the group. I was in the back of the group so I had a great view of what happened. The group (pulling trailers) came to a stop fast, and the bikes rested side by side of each other. It almost looked like a drill team exercise.

When the lanes narrow you may get the command for single file, or a hand signal holding 1 finger up. This isn't always the case though. It's important to remember even when riding staggered, the whole lane belongs to you when maneuvering curves.

Let's all try to remember these few rules, and start the season off right with a safe trip to Tennessee. I know Darlene and I am really looking forward to it. Oh, and one other rule to keep in mind.

*Keep the shinny side up and the rubber side down.*