



BLUE KNIGHTS International LEMC BASIC GROUP RIDING HANDBOOK

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FROM THE SAFETY OFFICER:

Thank you for joining the activities of the **Blue Knights International Law Enforcement Motorcycle Club**.

This handbook is intended to be a guide only, nothing more.

All members should familiarize themselves with the information in this guide so we can enjoy the adventures of the road together safely and without incident. We cannot prepare you for every possible situation as every on-road encounter; incident, situation or emergency is different and remains the individual rider's responsibility to respond appropriately. **Rider's must be AWARE, must be ALERT and must be VIGILANT at all times.** A safe and enjoyable ride is our primary concern.

Since we are continuously working to improve our riding skills, I welcome any recommendations for change to this handbook. We can't do this without your involvement.

Be aware and be safe The adventures of the road are waiting for us.....

Sincerely,

Roger "Crash" Byars
International Safety Officer
February, 2011

DISCLAIMER:
EVERY EFFORT HAS BEEN MADE TO ENSURE THE INFORMATION CONTAINED IN THIS HANDBOOK IS CURRENT AND ACCURATE. HOWEVER NEITHER THE VANCOUVER ISLAND BLUE KNIGHTS – BC VIII, BLUE KNIGHTS INTERNATIONAL NOR THE AUTHOR MAKES ANY CLAIMS AS TO THE ACCURACY OF THE INFORMATION PUBLISHED.



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1. SAFETY

The Blue Knights International LEMC has adopted the following basic policy for group rides: Ride Safe, Be Courteous, use your Common Sense and Have Fun.

Fundamental principles of safe group rides shall be reinforced through the sharing of educational material printed by nationally recognized sources. Nevertheless, the ultimate responsibility for safety of riding belongs to individual members/riders.

2. THE SIMPLE STUFF

- a) Check your bike beforehand. Proper maintenance is a pre-requisite for a day of safe riding. Check oil and tire pressures before you leave home. Check electrical systems to ensure all signal lights are working.
- b) Have what you will need for the ride with you. Remember water or fruit juices, proper clothing to encompass any inclement weather changes and a cell phone if you have one. Don't forget tools and a first aid kit.
- c) Have a full gas tank and empty bladder!
- d) Show up for rides 15-30 minutes before the pre-ride briefing so you don't miss important information or keep others waiting.
- e) Ride Safe, Be Courteous, Have Fun.

3. PRE-RIDE BRIEFING

Fifteen minutes prior to departure, the Lead Road/Ride Captain will give a pre-ride briefing to go over the route and review group riding communications and safety topics. Be patient and give your full attention. Group riding communications and safety topics must be covered at the beginning of each group ride. This may not be your first group ride but it could be for the person riding in front of or behind you! This pre-ride briefing is for safety. Ask questions, don't be bashful and make certain you have all the information you need regarding the ride. If you're a new rider or new to the group this may be a good time to inform the Road Captains what they need to know about you and your riding limitations. They will be happy to accommodate you eg. If you prefer to ride up front or in the rear of the group.

4. GROUP SIZE (Breaking Up Is Hard To Do)

Groups are usually limited to smaller sizes however this is not always possible. In the event of larger groups keep in mind you are riding your own ride and every situation on the road is different. At times the groups may have to break up to accommodate merging traffic and other vehicles sharing the road and intersections. The following sections will provide more information on these topics.



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5. KEY GROUP RIDE PERSONNEL

5.1. **Safety Officer:**

Promotes safety and supports the Road Captains.

5.2. **Road Captains:**

Responsible for ride organization. There are two Road Captains to a group – Lead & Sweep.

5.3. **Road Captain (Lead):**

Positioned at the front of the group and is in charge of the ride. All group riding communication comes from the Lead.

5.4. **Road Captain (Sweep):**

Positioned at the back of the group. Known as “the Sweep”, they will watch over the group and provide assistance to any rider that may require help.

5.5. **Ride Leader:**

Anyone can be appointed as a Ride Leader if they wish to ‘host’ a ride themselves or if a Road Captain requests their assistance to lead a group.

6. NEW RIDERS

If a particular situation dictates circumstances such as support of new or inexperienced riders or new engine break-in limitations a special ride group may be formed for the limited rider or riders.

New riders and new bikes should ride as close to the front as possible. The reasons are:

- a) The closer to the front, the slower you ride
- b) You are less likely to be separated from the ride leader by traffic at a stoplight.
- c) Ride pace is limited to match break-in speed for new motorcycles

7. FORMATION RIDING

7.1. **Staggered:**

The standard group riding formation will be the staggered formation. The Ride Leader *always leads the group from the left*. The hand signal for staggered formation is the left hand raised in the two-finger victory sign and the wrist rotated back and forth on a vertical axis.

7.2. **Single File:**

It is often desirable to ride single file because of narrow curvy roads, obstacles, or other hazards. The hand signal is the left hand raised above the head with the “index” finger pointed up.

7.3. **Positioning.**

The staggered formation increases the distance from the rider in front, yet, maintains a compact group. Give yourself enough room to stop in an emergency, but do not give unnecessary space and cause the group to be drawn out or lengthened. Remember, you or the riders on the other side of the lane may need to change lane sides in an emergency. You should be able to see the face of the rider in front of you clearly in their mirror.



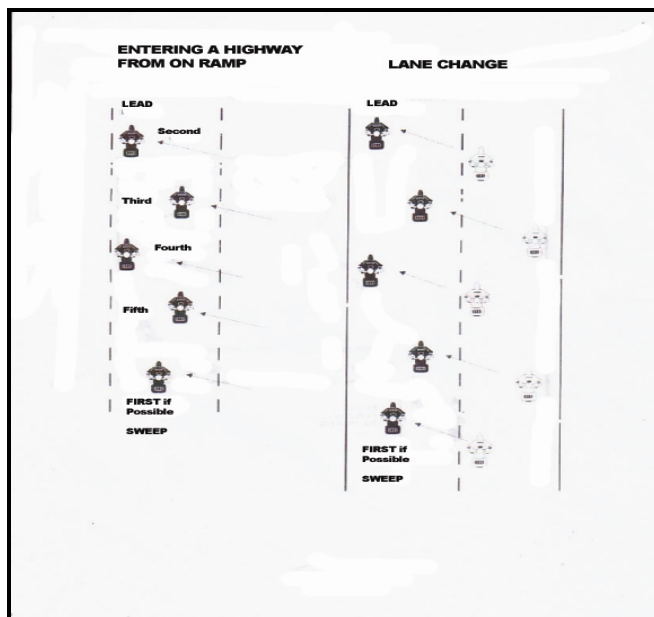
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7.4. Consistency.

Be consistent. Do not continually open and close the gap between you and the person in front of you. The safest method is to be seen in the mirror of the rider in front of you and to look for the rider to the rear of you in your mirror.

7.5. Safety.

Formation group riding is intended to promote safety by increasing our visibility to automobile drivers. **It is not intended to be mandatory if a situation dictates otherwise.** Staggered formation increases our visibility to automobile drivers. Single file adjustments, or emergent evasive action should take place safely and whenever warranted; this remains the rider's individual responsibility. Safety remains the prevailing factor for all rides. Formation adjustments may be warranted and necessary without and/or before a Ride Leader demonstrates such a signal. Eg. A narrow or winding section of road may require changing from staggered to single file.



8. STANDARD MANEUVERS

8.1. Changing Lanes.

When the Ride Leader wants to change lanes, the standard hand signal or turn signal will be given. Riders are to shoulder check (look first) signal, and follow the rider ahead. Change lanes only when it is safe to do so and **after the Ride Leader has changed**. If Lead and Sweep have radio communication, the Sweep takes over the lane when advised by the Lead, and then the Lead changes lanes when clear with the other riders following. Covered in pre-ride briefing.

8.2. Stop Signs and stop Lights.

Groups should collapse "compress" their formations at stop lights or signs. Bikes should stop in two's side-by-side, acknowledge their intent to proceed to each other and proceed together, re-



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establishing the staggered formation as soon as the intersection is cleared. Riders must at all times make their own traffic judgments and proceed only when each is confident to do so safely.

8.3. Filling the Gap.

If a rider drops out of a staggered formation and the ride is not stopping it is desirable to preserve the *integrity of the formation by filling the gap*. Each rider in the line directly behind the gap shall move forward one space. Always check your mirrors.

8.4. Passing.

Pass quickly, but safely. If possible, ride Leaders will complete the pass far enough beyond the vehicle being passed to provide sufficient room for the entire group to pass and move in. Otherwise riders will pass on an independent basis. Remember to shoulder check, signal, shoulder check and remember there are riders behind you.

9. HIGH ALERT AREAS

9.1. Intersections:

Intersections are one of the more dangerous areas as traffic comes from many different directions including behind. A red light provides no physical barrier to traffic!

9.2. Merging onto Highways:

Merging onto Highways requires alertness and good judgment. The Ride Leader will try to facilitate the merging as a group however, this is not always possible. You should merge safely and, if split from the group, reconnect safely as traffic conditions allow.

9.3. Turns.

The Ride Leader will signal turns using standard hand or electronic signals. **Duplicate the signal and pass it back.**

9.4. Parked Cars.

Group rides which may pass curbside parked cars should accommodate single file formation riding. The reason is to avoid suddenly opened car doors, people and/or animals darting out from between cars.

9.5. Passing Large Trucks.

BE SEEN. Assume you are not easily seen and you'll probably be correct. Depending upon traffic conditions the Ride Leader may give the single file signal. It is advisable to move to the opposite side of the lane away from the truck. If you cannot see the driver in his mirror, he cannot see you!

10. ROAD HAZARDS

If you see a hazard such as a pothole, rock, tire tread or gravel, point to it so the rider behind you sees the problem also. Point with your left hand or right foot depending on which side of you it is.

11. TRAFFIC – Merging from Left or Right

Automobiles will sometimes have to merge into the group. LET THEM IN ...they will not like it there and will usually go away the first chance they get.

12. WHEN YOU BECOME ... RIDE LEADER

Stoplights and traffic conditions will often break up the group. You may even find you have become the leader of a split group from the original group. Carry on just as you have been. The Ride Leader should



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realize the break and slow down, if necessary and when safe to do so. Another Road Captain may pull up and take over but in any case, split groups should continue on to the next destination or planned stop.

13. SPACE CUSHIONING

A rider may need more space (possibly the whole lane) because of their experience level, road conditions, or bike's handling characteristics. The rider should signal this by extending the left arm down and slightly to the side with the palm facing the rear and with a waving motion backward. Riders should drop back and give the rider showing the signal more room and be prepared for the signaling rider to move anywhere on the road, and/or pull off the road and stop.

14. MOVING OUT OF THE GROUP

A rider may need to drop out of their position in the group and take up a position perhaps in front of the Sweep to adjust for their special needs or to eventually pull out and stop all together. Whatever the need, the procedure must be done safely. There are three methods for moving out of the group:

- a) If on a multi-lane road, the rider shoulder checks, signals to change lanes, does so, then waves the other riders to pass.
- b) The rider keeps to his/her side of the lane and waves the other riders to pass.
- c) If a rider has a serious need to drop back or stop, the rider signals the riders behind for more space and pulls off the road when it can be done safely. Immediately wave other riders to pass.

The Sweep will stay with the last rider to either ride with him/her or provide assistance if necessary.

15. BEING OVER TAKEN BY OTHER BIKES

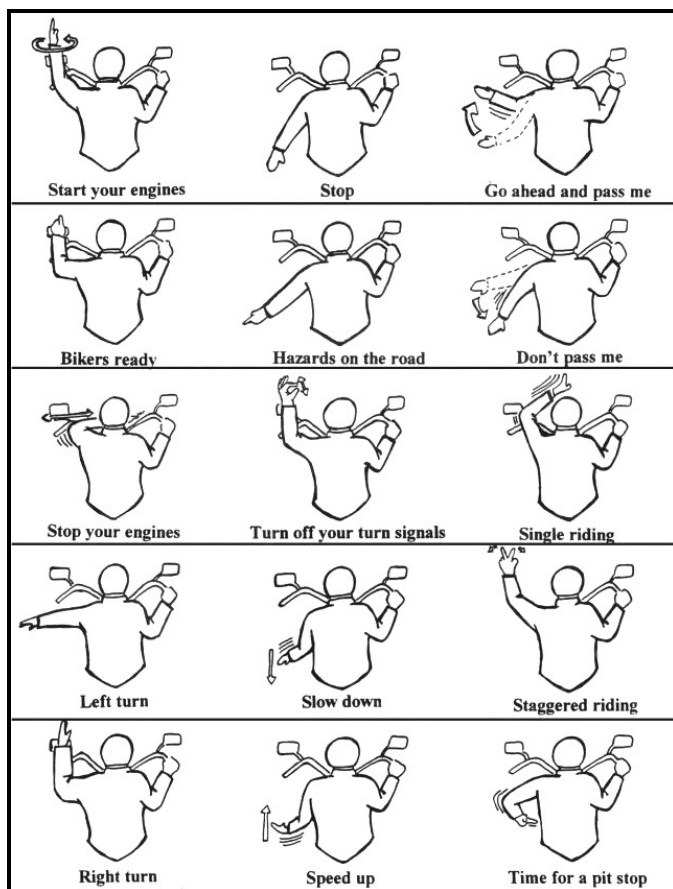
Sometimes other bikes will overtake our group from the rear. This is a concern on two lane twisty roads. The group is likely already in single file. Move to the right and allow the faster rider to pass safely and with as much safety and consideration as necessary for the both of you.



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16. COMMUNICATION (HAND SIGNALS)

Riders often wish to pass information to riders behind them. This is especially true for the Ride Leader. Hand signals are used for this purpose. Be alert and watch for these signals. When you see one, pass it back. Passengers can help with this. Hand signals include:



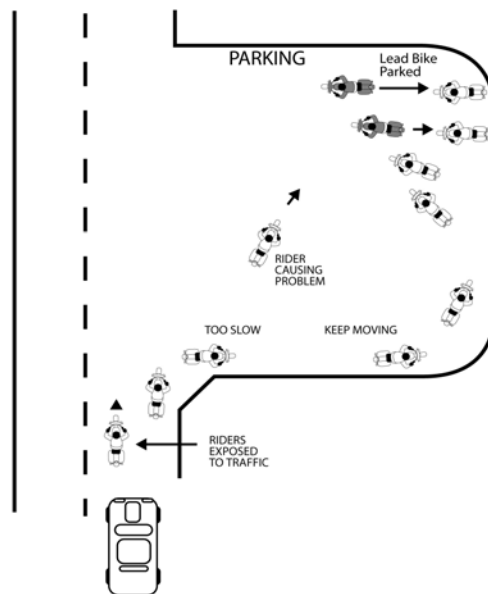


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17. PARKING

- Plan ahead – park diagonal, it allows for ease of pulling out in the direction of travel. Park so you can ride out.
- Do not park on a down hill grade where you are blocked from riding forward and cannot ride out – if you have to push your bike out it will be difficult pushing it up hill. Any pushing of the motorcycle should be down hill or on the level.
- Remember asphalt gets very hot in summer and kickstands can sink into it. Think about the ground where you've parked.
- If your bike has keys, remember to take them.

PARKING LOT / PULL OFF



18. GROUP DEPARTURES

This is an unceremonious activity. When the Ride Leader says it's time to depart for the ride, everyone should line up behind him/her two by two. Get directly behind the Ride Leader now if you need to be in the front of the group. Don't be bashful about telling someone that you need to position yourself in front. They will understand.



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19. FERRY TRAVEL

If your ride starts on an Island or has an Island destination you are going to have to take a ferry. There are procedures for loading and unloading which you should be aware of. They are:

19.1. Loading

- There is a dedicated staging area for motorcycles, the ticket agent/loading official will let you know where this location is.
- When you notice the traffic has stopped unloading from the ferry, start to prepare yourself by getting your helmet and gloves on.
- The loading ferry worker will indicate for the motorcycles to start up, watch for his/her signal.
- When directed, proceed up the ramp and onto the ferry. Care should be taken when on the ramp and also on the car deck, especially if the ramp and deck are wet.
- Proceed **as directed** to the motorcycle parking area. Typically, the motorcycles are parked at the front, at an angle with the rear wheel facing outboard against the rub rail.
- Leave enough room between you and your riding neighbour to allow them to put their motorcycle on the side stand and lean it towards you.
- Park your motorcycle on the side stand and leave in 1st gear. Turn off the fuel (if required)
- Locate a chock (wedge), usually lying behind the rub rail. This chock should be placed on the opposite side from your stand and under the frame, to stop your motorcycle falling over away from the stand side.
- Lock luggage bags (if possible)
- Lock helmet to the bike or take it with you – Do not leave your helmet on the bike seat as ship vibration could dislodge your helmet allowing it to fall to the deck.

19.2. Unloading

- Give yourself time to get your riding gear on prior to the ship docking.
- Do not remove the chock until the boat has come to a complete stop. If the chock is removed and you are sitting on your bike prior to the boat coming to a complete stop, a sudden movement from the ship rubbing on the berth guide walls can upset your balance.
- Once the ship is at complete stop - Remove the chock and stow behind the rub rail.
- Mount your motorcycle.
- Lift the side stand.
- Turn on the fuel (if required).
- Switch ON the ignition.
- Using the gear shift - select Neutral.
- Start-up - Use choke (if applicable).
- Let your motorcycle warm up.
- The crew will now be moving the guard rails back to allow traffic to unload.
- They will unload a few cars prior to indicating the motorcycles to unload.
- When indicated to unload select 1st gear and perform a SMOOTH / Unhurried departure from the car deck and onto the ramp.
- Follow the motorcycle in front as you leave the deck onto the ramp – DO NOT pass.
- As you proceed out of the exit ramp, watch for traffic around you as you make your way to the highway.



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20. RIDE YOUR OWN RIDE

Never ride above your personal comfort level. Advise the Ride Leader during the pre-ride briefing of any issues or concerns that you may have. If during the ride, you feel pressured or uncomfortable, pull out of the group and take up a position at the front of the Sweep. The Sweep will ride at your comfort level and appreciate your good judgment in taking positive action. If the two of you lose the group, someone else will assume the Sweep duties of the first group.

Although you are part of a group, you are also an individual and the sole operator of your bike. **“Ride your own ride”** is the term used to emphasize that you must take responsibility for your riding.

21. HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Are you well? Have you had enough sleep? Have you taken something that would make it unwise or unsafe to ride? Do you have proper and safe clothing? Should you tell a Road Captain of your limitations and concerns? Don't be bashful!

In the event of an accident within your riding group it is important to know the following procedures will take place:

The Road Captain Sweep has been trained to deal with any mishap whether minor or serious, accidental or mechanical. All Road Captains have cell phones and if necessary will call for help immediately. The Road Captain(s) will assist immediately in every way possible, please be responsive to their requests.

Whether you yourself suffered a minor spill or were witness to an accident remember that before proceeding onward, please take a moment to assess yourself. You should feel calm, rational and able to concentrate before riding. Acknowledge your emotional state and ask for any assistance you may require in order, to continue safely.

22. PRE-RIDE CHECKS

Riders need to take some simple actions prior to the ride to ensure their motorcycle is ready for the road. Check your machine's general condition, critical components and fluid levels prior to every ride to help ensure a safe ride. (tires, wheels, cables, controls, lights, oil, fluids, belt/chain and chassis.)



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Ride your own ride

Be Safe

Be Alert

Be Aware

Be Courteous

Use Common Sense

HAVE FUN!

Acknowledgement

We wish to acknowledge Terry Morphy, Safety Officer, BC VIII for his efforts and work in preparing this Basic Group Riding Handbook, as well as former International Safety Officer Clinton Cagle for his leadership and vision on this project. Several other Chapter and Conference Safety Officers were involved in the review and minor revisions of this handbook. We extend our deepest appreciation for their dedication in helping to bring this handbook to conclusion.