

**S T E A M**  
SEMINAR TO EDUCATE AND MOTIVATE

**ROAD CAPTAIN**

**MANUAL**

**ABATE OF WASHINGTON**

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# Road Captain Guidelines

*By Mailman*

The Road Captain position is above all else a "common sense" job. Guidelines are fine, but there is no substitute for common sense. The Road Captain's mission is to get a group of riders and possibly a number of cages from one point to another in a safe and efficient manner. Detailed, prior planning and effective communication are your tools of the trade. The larger the number of individuals involved, the more you must use these tools.

## 1) PLANNING THE ROUTE

- a) First determine the time available. Set a beginning and ending time.
  - i) The time of year and anticipated weather as well as the expected number of participants must be considered.
- b) Next, determine the length of the ride and the desired number of stops.
  - i) If you want a long ride, you need more time
  - ii) If you want more stops, you need more time.
  - iii) If the days are short and the weather is expected to be poor, you need more stops, and/or more time, or a shorter ride.
  - iv) The larger the number of expected participants more time and longer stops are required. A half hour stop is fine for a dozen people, but if you have over 50 you'll need at least an hour for each stop.
  - v) If the ride is to be over 70 miles, time must be allowed for re-fueling. It is best done in conjunction with a restaurant or tavern stop, so you don't have people who don't need to re-fuel sitting around a gas station when they'd rather be eating or playing pool.
- c) Determine the area you want to cover.
  - i) Scenic back roads will require more time than rolling down the slab (freeway).
  - ii) Stops at parks, rest areas or scenic overlooks generally won't be as time consuming as restaurants or taverns. They also keep drinking to a minimum.
- d) Pre-run the planned route, carefully and accurately recording all times and distances. Go at or less than the speed limit as many bikes always take more time than a few.
  - i) Verify that your time allowed for both traveling and stopping is adequate. Whatever time you think is right is probably not enough. You don't want people that are "running late" to ride in an unsafe manner to "catch up"
  - ii) Verify that all your planned stops will actually be open for business on the day of your run. Also notify the managers of the stops of the date and time and approximate number of people that will visit them.
  - iii) It's a good idea to re-run your route a day or two before the event to check for roads under construction, detours, bridges out, gas stations closed, etc.
- e) It is a good idea to have a section you can delete if the weather is bad.

## 2) DECIDE ON THE TYPE OF RUN – PACK RIDE OR RALLY

### a) Pack Ride.

- i) Best for smaller groups. A larger number can be broken into smaller groups with separate leaders.
- ii) Keeping the pack together.
  - (1) Police escort. Fine if *you* can get it, but difficult to impossible to arrange.
  - (2) Small groups so no one gets "caught at the red light". Each group has a leader so no one gets lost.
  - (3) Use road guards and don't stop for traffic signals. Problems are: it's illegal, its dangerous and its very poor public relations.
    - (a) If you do decide to use road guards, use the one shot method. Each road guard blocks one location, and then falls into the rear of the pack. You must determine exactly how many locations *you* have to block, then have at least that many guards right behind the leader, who will point to where the guard needs to be. *Never* have road guards passing the pack so they can repeat the process.
    - (b) Never run a light that's already red. Stop the entire pack till it changes, then post road guards(s).
    - (c) On freeways, ride in the lane next to the right lane and leave spaces so traffic can merge on or off the freeway.
    - (d) When moving from a stop, accelerate slowly and keep speed 5 mph under the limit till the pack is all together. A large pack has a pronounced "accordion effect". You don't want the riders in the rear going 80 mph to catch up.

### b) Rally

- i) Each entrant has a map, or instruction sheet which can also serve as a score card if you are drawing cards, throwing darts or dice, etc. Make sure you have way more than you think you'll need. Paper is cheap.
- ii) Entrants can ride alone or together depending on their preference.
- iii) Some clubs give out directions *only* to the next checkpoint. The drawback is that if *you* miss a checkpoint, or arrive after it's closed, you're lost. Best to have the whole run on one map/direction sheet.
- iv) Have the time that each checkpoint is open clearly stated in the instructions. Make sure that whoever is manning the point is there for the entire scheduled time.

## 3) COMMUNICATION

- a) Be sure your run flyer clearly states the leaving time or period of time (example: sign up 9 am to 10:30 am, or last bike out at 12 noon) never leave early.
- b) With a rally type of run all information is on the map (instruction sheet so you'll only have to answer a few questions.
- c) With a pack ride, call a rider's meeting 10 minutes before departure. Using PA, bullhorn, megaphone or sound off like you've got a pair - explain where you're going and what route you're going by. Make sure everyone understands that only road guards are in front of the pack. Make sure that road guards understand what they are to do. Announce what arrangements have been made for breakdowns. One or more crash trucks following are preferred.

- d) At each stop loudly proclaim "leaving in 5 minutes". A 10 minute call is also desirable, as *many* will want to use the restroom. If the weather is poor, more time will be *necessary* to get dressed. If you've 70 or more miles into the run, a "check your fuel" reminder about 20 minutes before leaving is a good idea.
- 4) PROBLEMS AND BREAKDOWNS.
- a) With small groups, everyone can stop if someone has a problem.
    - i) Get completely off the road.
    - ii) Deal exclusively with the problem at hand. This is not the time to break out a beer or make a major change of clothes. Be ready to go on a moments notice.
    - iii) If anyone breaks down on the left side of a highway or freeway, do not stop on the left. Get all bikes off the road on the right. That way you don't have a bunch of bikes trying to merge from the wrong side.
  - b) With larger groups, have at least one crash truck. Having a cell phone in the truck can be very helpful in event of accident or injury. A can of gas and a few tools wouldn't hurt. A first aid kit is also a good idea.
- 5) AFTER THE RUN.
- a) Make written notes of any problems such as too much or too little time at stops, or maybe earlier or later leaving time, possibly instructions were confusing. Keep all your planning notes, maps, instructions, etc. You'll be glad you did when you plan your next run. And remember, you can't make everyone happy all the time. Someone will find fault with the most "perfect" run. Just use your common sense.