

## Riders Manual

Currently, over 118,000 ALR members meet in over a thousand chapters in every domestic department and in at least three foreign countries. True to the Legion, all riders focus on service to veterans and service members, and strive to maintain an American Legion image. The ALR is not a “motorcycle club” (MC) and all riders must avoid creating the perception of being a MC.

### **THE RIDER'S CREED**

**Riders dedicate themselves to the success of the American Legion. I know that, through my efforts, I can make a difference.**

**I alone am responsible for myself and to my fellow riders. I will conduct myself with the highest degree of integrity and honor.**

**Deeds, not words, create change. I will persevere against any and all things that prevent my success. My resolve and strength will overcome all obstacles.**

**Each rider is first a member of the American Legion Family. I will actively participate in willingly support their endeavors.**

**Readily will I join other riders in activities and events which support our missions. I will do so gladly knowing I volunteered to be an American Legion Rider.**

**Success is the only acceptable conclusion. I will allow nothing to dissuade me or impede me from service to my family, community, country and especially our Veterans.**

Introduction:

**Congratulations!** You have joined **American Legion Riders**, one of the greatest riding associations in the world. Within American Legion Riders our number one goal is to ride safe and have fun while representing the American Legion. In order to have fun riding in a group, we have to be safe and that means all riders know and understand the importance of safety. Group riding requires additional concentration, and attention while riding. This manual is designed to help you understand our riding program and what you can expect when participating in group rides. The most important thing to remember is “You and you alone are responsible for your safety”. Therefore, ride your own ride and never exceed your riding capabilities or ride outside your comfort zone.

The PRIME DIRECTIVE, don't hit the bike in front of you...or any other bike. Your safety and your life are more important than arriving together as a group; after all, we are all out for fun and enjoyment.

# Participation:

Participation is the key for this organization to accomplish all of our goals. Your volunteerism is what makes things happen, and is the foundation of the organization. From volunteering to cook or sponsor another venue at the post, we are the only individuals who make our Post shine. So, welcome, get out and meet the rest of the great people who you will be riding with through the Post. Thanks for all you will do...

## **Road Captain:**

The Road Captain is a fundamental part of any ride planning and is in charge of group rides. The Road Captain deals with the police and other unexpected surprises making sure everybody is safe and has fun. They will instruct any rider to ride in a specific position within the group or to leave the group entirely (misconduct, disorderly/unsafe riding faulty/unsafe equipment). Watch for their signals and follow their directions. The Road Captain will always be equipped with a cell phone, radio or other communication device. Have his/her number.

They help educate new riders in hand signal and riding etiquette. Feel free to ask the Road Captain questions on all aspects of motorcycle riding and safety.

At each ride they may:

- Conduct pre-ride talks (pace of ride, road/weather conditions)
- Review the ride route (gas/rest/food stops)
- Appoint a sweep rider (Ride Safety Officer) to ride at the rear
- Appoint a Mid Captain for large group rides

## **Mid Captain:**

A Mid Captains responsibility is much the same as the Road Captain. In a large group scenario, Mid Captains are used to breaking up into smaller controllable sizes. Most often this is used while traveling in heavy traffic or in areas of multiple stop signs or lights. Smaller groups help the ride to be completed safely. Small groups will blend back in to the main group at different points of the ride. Mid Captains help prevent riders from speeding or otherwise using poor judgment in attempt to “keep up” with the main group.

## **Ride Safety Officer:**

This very important position takes the “last” position in a group ride.

The Safety Officer communicates to the Ride Captain, using hand signals, the status of the group. (See hand signals Page) If the group becomes separated, the Safety Officer may move to the lead and becomes the Mid Captain for the entire group.

It is the Safety Officer's responsibility to oversee and communicate emergency situations appropriately so emergency help can be notified if necessary. The Safety Officer is equipped with a cell phone, radio or other communication device.

# **Individual Responsibilities**

## **RIDE WITHIN YOUR OWN KNOWN SAFE CAPABILITIES**

Participants in a group ride must be willing to follow basic and sensible rules to ensure the safety of all involved. If you are unwilling to follow the rules, do not participate in the group ride. Ride behind or separate and meet up with the group at stops.

Riders should know the basic hand signals (See hand signals Page) of group riding and “use them”. Every rider has the capability and responsibility to use hand signals as necessary. It becomes your individual responsibility to signal the other riders of hazards in the road.

Any rider that is uncomfortable with the speed of the ride, should motion riders behind them to pass to take a forward position.

If the rider in front of you, signals of a road hazard, you are **obligated** to pass the signal on to riders behind you. All signals should be relayed by repeating the same hand signals on through the entire group at all times.

All riders are expected to be ready to ride (kickstands up) at the designated time with a **full tank** of fuel, **empty bladder** and appropriate clothing.

Safety is everyone's responsibility. Do not consume alcohol or use drugs or medication that could impair your judgment, ability to ride or the safety of yourself and others. If you have any concerns about a ride, talk to the Road Captain.

# Riding Together/Group Rides

## Formations

If at any time you feel the riding intensity is beyond your skill level, signal for those behind you to move ahead. Notify the Road Captain or Safety Officers of your concerns at your earliest convenience. Do not drop out of a ride without notification.

Watch for signals from the Road Captain and relay all signals to other riders.

The group will stop for all traffic signal and obey all traffic laws. Do not run stop signs. Only official escorts may block intersections.

Watch for traffic signal changes and be prepared. Safely bunch up at approaching intersections to shorten the group length. Do not run Red Lights.

Staggered formation is the norm on most roads. In staggered formation you should follow the bike directly ahead of you by 2-3 seconds and the bike to the left or right of you by 1-2 seconds. This is not always possible. Single file formation is normal for twisty roads, narrow roads/bridges, entrance/exit ramps or construction zones. The entire width of the lane belongs to the rider.

Allow room to swerve in case of emergency or road hazard.

Maintain your location within the group and do not pass unless directed to do so. If you need to change location in the group, wait until the next stop and change position when the ride starts again. It is common courtesy for the rider who is following in the other position of the lane to signal to the next rider in the lane to move up one position if vacant.

## Lane Changes and Passing

Watch for, and pass back to the Safety Officer, all turning signals from the Road Captain.

- Multi-lane highway lane changes: all riders will hold their positions. The Safety Officer will reposition him/herself into the new lane to open a gap for the rest of the group to enter. Again, hold your position until the rider in front of you changes lanes
- Two lane highway: no more than one or two bikes should enter the passing lane at any one time. When those bikes have passed and pulled back into their lane, the next 1 or 2 riders may begin to pass. The Road Captain will stay in the passing lane after passing as long as the road is clear to create a large gap ahead of the passing vehicle and to notify riders of safe passing. Other vehicles may enter the group for a short period. Respect their right to use the road. They usually leave the group at their first opportunity. Stay safe.

### **Group Separations/Dropping Out:**

If you must leave the group, exit from the side of the group, preferably at a location that does not disturb the other riders. Signal to another rider that you are leaving so the information gets passed to the Safety Officer and Road Captain.

The Safety Officer, riding at the back, will stop to help any rider who has to drop out of the group. When the Safety Officer stops to help someone, the last rider in the group becomes the Safety Officer and will inform the Road Captain at the next stop.

If the group gets separated the last rider of the forward group becomes the Safety Officer for that group. The Road Captain will stop or leave a rider to wait for and direct the flowing group at any intersection where the group makes a turn and is separated. If you become the lead of the trailing group and do not know the group ride route stop or signal to advance a rider who knows the route.

The Road Captain may send a rider back to check on the separated riders or continue the ride.

### **Breakdowns:**

On long rides pair up with a riding partner. If your partner drops out you are to drop out and assist if possible. In this instance, the Safety Officer will continue on and notify the Road Captain. If the rider does not have a partner the Safety Officer will stop to assist and call the Road Captain to advise them of the situation.

### **Accident:**

If a mishap occurs with a rider the Safety Officer and rider partner will stop to render assistance. Other riders should continue with the group or follow signals. The group will pull off the road at the first safe location and respond to the accident. Do not create congestion on the roadway.

**USE EXTREME CAUTION**

### **Parking:**

Watch where the Road Captain is positioned in the parking area. Slowly ride behind and get on-line. Back up to desired position. Watch for potholes, uneven surfaces and gravel.

# Time To Ride

## Meeting Place and Time

Riders should strive to arrive on time at the meeting place. This gives rides an opportunity for a final gear check and head count.

The Road Captain will normally arrive at the departure location 30 minutes prior, to be available for briefing group riders, Safety Officers and Mid Captains.

## Overnight/Out of Town Trips:

These rides might have more than one ride plan involving multiple Road Captains. Each Road Captain will lead their ride and are responsible for planning.

## Pre-Ride Briefing:

The Road Captain will conduct a briefing for the entire group. **BE THERE!**

They will review the pace of the ride, route to the destination, planned stops and procedure for the return ride. Safety Officer and Mid Captains will be designated. Group may be split if needed.

A review of signals may be conducted and any questions answered.

## Getting Your Head in the Ride:

There are a lot of traps on the roads and all roads have hazards to negotiate. This thought provoking section highlights only a fraction of the hazards you may encounter. While every hazard is different and there may not be one single solution. The rider must decide their own course of action to successfully cope with a hazard. From one patch of surface to the next, one day to another, it's not realistic to assume the road surface will be consistently good. Look for changes in color or texture of the road ahead. Avoiding common hazards means observing the hazard in time to react. (Source of the following information is from "Proficient Motorcycling" by David L. Hough) Remember, practice is training, and when difficult situations arise, you rely on your training.

**Road Configurations:** Twisting and curving roads increases the enjoyment of riding on back roads for most riders. Familiar roads, free of hazards, may still take a rider by surprise as a rider doesn't recall every curve exactly. Small errors can have magnified consequences when riding in a group. Always operate your motorcycle at a safe speed, not to exceed your vision or skills.

**Unexpected Objects:** Always be prepared for an abrupt stop or altered course as you negotiate each curve. Prepare for whatever combinations of dips and turns in the road that may be just beyond your sight.

**Apexes/Cornering Lines:** The “Tail of the Dragon” is a great example as many riders sharpen their floorboards accelerating through curves. Almost all curves camber (slant) nicely into the turn, increasing traction and lean over clearance. However, there are a few curves that slant the wrong direction, decreasing leanover clearance and available traction. An improperly graded road can be a disaster in the making. Use the “slow, look, lean and roll” technique.

**Roadway Contaminates:** Spend time learning how to read the road ahead and adjust your speed to keep reserve traction/acceleration available. The key is to look for changes in the appearance of the surface that indicate a possible change in the road condition. Avoiding common hazards means observing the hazard in time to react.

- **Gravel-** We live in Oregon, expect gravel in the corners and driveway/side-road entrances. Loose gravel decreases traction.
- **Edge Traps-** Work zone warning signs may be your first indication and shouldn't be ignored. Keep your tires away from raised pavement edges. If you must cross over an edge, do so at maximum angle. Roll the throttle to bounce the front wheel over the edge then straighten the bike.
- **Loose Gravel-** Stay out of the deep stuff and away from the center line on a two way road. Riding too slow causes more wobbles than moving along a little faster. Nothing excites a rider like their front wheel plowing into loose gravel. The deep gravel can take down an unexpected rider.
- **Tar Snakes/Pot Holes/Slippery Stuff-** It's important to devote part of your attention to road conditions. Even when riding in a group, you alone are responsible for your course direction. A rider in front of you may not see a hazard or be able to signal.
- **Dirt-** Dirt blown across the road might decrease traction to some extent but will quickly turn to slippery mud with rain.
- **Oil-** When stopping, look at the pavement where you put your feet down. Vehicles leak oil and oil buildups are common at intersections. Be aware of the temperature and weather conditions. If the weather is hot and dry, be suspicious of dark puddles. It may be oil
- **Bridges-** Be aware of smooth concrete or steel grates. Steel grates will cause your tires to wiggle around and change available traction.
- **Agricultural Areas-** We all enjoy country rides. Watch the road for colored areas indication farm equipment has tracked dirt or mud onto the pavement. Country roads are not maintained as well as main roads.
- **Objects-** Even flat objects are reason for concern. Flattened soda cans have been known to become a ski when tire cross over the can when brakes are applied. This can be a hazard to you or the riders behind you. Let off the breaks and allow your tire to roll over the object if it becomes lodged under your tire.
- **Logging Trucks-** Oregon's favorite vehicle! Riders should increase their following distance when behind a logging truck. Logging trucks are known for falling/flying debris as with any vehicle hauling an open load. Be careful when passing as drivers of these trucks have turned left with little or no notice where you least expect it. Log trucks must travel on dirt/rock roads and often their tires are filled with them. They become projectiles while traveling at road speeds.

# Ride Types

## **Meet & Decide Rides:**

This is not an “organized” ride, but rather members may decide on a ride dependent on the weather. “Hey, let’s go for a ride!” and send out a message via phone, text or whatever means available.

If the Road Captain is participating, he may lead the ride or allow anyone interested in leading. The goal is to drag more people out for a ride and getting to know your fellow riders.

## **Sponsor Rides:**

This is not an “organized” ride, but a ride to show appreciation to a business that sponsored an event or to show appreciation to a business in a community.

A show of force is expected and might help ensure a sponsorship in the future!

**Poker Runs:** An organized event, where riders visit 5 to 7 checkpoints. Drawing a playing card or rolling a dice at each checkpoint. The event normally has a last bike in/out time and a buy-in fee.

## **Legacy Run:**

The Legacy Run is a Poker Run where participants will draw/choose a card at designated checkpoints/stops. The American Legion is a host for this event. Maximum participation is encouraged. This event has been a success in the past and is how the post is known to the local community. In recent years, our donation to the American Legion Legacy Fund has grown because of our commitment and the value placed on the event.



# Equipment

## Safety Equipment:

- **Helmet-** A DOT approved helmet goes a long way towards saving your skull and is required in Oregon.
- **Eye Protection-** Is necessary for the rider and passenger. Eye protection keeps the wind, rain and bugs from flying into your eyes.
- **Boots-** Protect your feet from weather, road debris and help keep your feet planted firmly on the pegs/floorboards and ground. They also protect you from the heat of your tail pipes. Boots that cover the ankle bone are highly recommended
- **Gloves-** Protection from the weather, road debris and a fall.
- **Boots-** Protect your feet from weather, road debris and help keep your feet planted firmly on the pegs/floorboards and ground. They also protect you from the heat of your tail pipes.
- **Earplugs-** Cut the wind noise at highway speeds and helps preserve your hearing (optional)

## Tool Kits:

Most Road Captains and Safety Offices carry tool kits. It's recommended you bring your own. Tool kits are invaluable when needed. Tool kit checklists can be easily found on the internet depending on your bike.

## First Aid Kits:

They say "There are two types of bikers, ones that have gone down and ones that will". A kit can be as large or small as you desire. It's always beneficial to take a CPR course, know how to stabilize a broken bone, stop bleeding etc. A quick response to someone's medical emergency can make a definite difference and help ensure a positive outcome. A detailed First Aid check list can be located on line at; <http://micapeak.com/checklists/>