

Safety Tip – Separation Anxiety

Let's start by reminding ourselves of two facts...

1 – Group Riding IS more dangerous than riding alone...

2 – You should always ride “your own capabilities” no matter what else happens...

Understanding the above at all times will keep you safer and allow YOU to make better decisions while riding.

But what about Separation Anxiety? This is the condition that seems to get more ride groups in trouble than almost any other situation. What creates this is simple... all it takes is a traffic light, but the results can be physically painful. Many accidents occur during this period of the ride so it's important to understand some fairly simple rules.

When riding groups are forced to break into smaller unplanned groups, everyone suddenly goes into a frantic effort to re-establish the connection as quickly as possible. This “anxiety” causes both leaders and followers to make unusual and sometimes poor decisions, all in an effort to hurry and get all the riders back into a comfortable group.

So what are the rules...?

1 – Realize that the group will become separated at some point, so plan for it to happen. No matter how hard you try, it will happen on almost every ride, long or short – period. Attempts to prevent this from occurring can be dangerous. Speeding up through intersections, slowing to abnormal speeds impeding traffic flow are the most common mistakes and can have serious results.

2 – It really does not matter that the group is split up. If proper planning is utilized then the group will survive the separation and arrive at the final destination. The type of ride will determine the needed planning. For example, going through town or maybe multiple towns all with traffic lights? Assign more Captains and create smaller sub-groups in advance. Maps anyone? Providing a map of the ride and explaining it to the group goes a long way in removing anxiety. It might mean that smaller groups will arrive at the destination – but they'll arrive more safely too.

3 – So Captain... you really want to get the group back together anyway? Not a problem, but make certain that it's done in a safe manner. Find a safe and large enough area to pull off the road to regroup. It may take a while to find one... One of the biggest mistakes made is in accepting “any place” to try and get everyone back together. Dirt or rocky lots, roadside bike lanes – not a safe place to regroup several motorcycles. Take your time and find a proper location that is safe, paved and off the main road to insure safety. So what if it takes five miles to find one... If there are no turns, it makes no difference at all.

4 – So there is a turn coming up and the original group is still broken up? Worried that some of the riders will miss the turn? First, did you review the map that you provided? If you're really concerned that this might happen, discuss using “marker riders” for your ride. This simply means that a rider will pull off the road at the turn and wait on the trailing group. This is often done with mid-sweepers or individuals comfortable with this procedure, but it's safer than trying to pull an entire collection of motorcycles into a questionable or dangerous area just so no one misses the turn.

5 – The group in front should not slow more than 5 miles per hour in their speed or impede traffic flow. The group behind should not speed up more than 5 miles per hour or rush passing situations trying to catch up. Patience Please...

Think about it – Safety First – even in separate groups...