

### Are You Game?

Do you like challenges and the chance to lead? Do you like motorcycling in groups? Do you like the satisfaction of a project you manage from “birth to death” done well? Well, then you have some of the qualities to become a Road Captain and lead a safe and exciting ride.



Top Cats is a premier riding club, known for doing safe group rides to interesting and fun destinations using motorcycle friendly routes. The rides can utilize a variety of roads that help riders to continue practicing their group riding skills. The rides are experiences that contribute to our confidence as group riders. To meet this challenge, a Road Captain takes time to make a detailed plan, solve the problems that arise, and recognize the needs of the riders who will be going on the ride. It is a great challenge, a fantastic opportunity AND...a can be extremely satisfying. This position requires the conviction and willingness to put personal riding preferences above the safe riding as a group, So start your engines and start planning a ride now! Research places and routes to take the club and seek out a mentor to support you! We all benefit in many ways from our group riding.

Why, you ask, is this the Kaution Korner article for February? Well, as a novice who took on the challenge, I learned a few especially important lessons that I would like to pass on to those of you who are planning to do a ride. Here is my advice on how to make sure the ride is safe for all. And to make sure that you have a satisfying experience that will keep you leading rides long into the future!

1. Be sure to lean on and make use of the experience and wisdom that is within the club and seek out a mentor! Our Senior road captains all have experience doing group rides. They all have seen what works and what does not work. Their support is priceless! Talk to a road captain and gather their advice as you work to plan your ride! Then...
2. Know your destination. Choose a place such as a lunch stop, museum, rally, mini-golf course or a strip club or anything that you feel makes your ride interesting, fun, and special. Commit to doing a pre-ride. There is a big difference between what you can see online vs. the route realities. Pre-riding will allow you to see the less safe portions like crossing four lanes of traffic to go the other direction on the road. Or exiting the gas station in a direction that leaves no room for pulling your group out safely. Or finding your rest stop has only one gas station and your planning did not allow for the time it takes for a large group to use it. All kinds of good planning will not compensate for plain old knowledge gained by doing the pre-ride.
3. Promote your ride. It is more fulfilling to lead a ride with more people than less. But when you are the road captain with a large group, the ride becomes more difficult to manage safely. The rule of thumb I use is when I get fourteen or more riders., I get support from participating road captains. I ask them to stage themselves as near the middle of the group as possible. When the group gets broken up, they can assist by leading the rest of the riders left behind by a traffic light or missed turn and help them rejoin the group as safely as possible.
4. Refer to the Top Cats Group Riding and Safety Seminar presentation. These modules address ways to group ride safely. Learning all of the seminar helps you group riding safely. The presentation consists of the sections:
  - Module 1 – Group Riding and Hand Signals
  - Module 2 – Rider / Co-Rider Obligations
  - Module 3 – Co-Riders
  - Module 4 – Accident Scene Management
  - Module 5 – Road Captain Course

Studying and learning our G.R.A.S.S. information and practicing those principles will assist you to perform safe motorcycling, group riding and leading a group ride safely. Repeated training will eventually make it become part of your riding DNA.

Becoming a Road Captain comes with a lot of responsibility but is very gratifying. Riders expect you to have a planned route with the appropriate rest and food stop(s) as warranted for the route. With the guidance of a mentor, and other road captain support on the day of the ride, you can navigate the challenging route to leading a successfully safe group ride.

And as a road captain, you will be an important part of maintaining the strong SAFE traditions of the Top Cats club!