

# VA 27-3 Road Captain SOP

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## CENTRAL VIRGINIA CHAPTER (VA 27-3) OF THE COMBAT VETERANS MOTORCYCLE ASSOCIATION® ROAD CAPTAIN STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES (SOP)

### 1.0. Introduction

Congratulations on your decision to become a VA 27-3 Road Captain (RC). As a RC you will make an important contribution to the success of our Chapter's safe rides. In order to have fun riding in a group, we have to be safe and have well qualified RCs. By volunteering you have already demonstrated you have the best interests of our Chapter at heart. This SOP is a guide to the rules and procedures to be followed by VA 27-3 RCs, and lists the qualification requirements to become a fully qualified RC.

### 2.0. Becoming a Road Captain (RCC)

Becoming a RC is not automatic. Volunteers are accepted as a Road Captain Candidate (RCC) provided they meet a short list of prerequisites. Once an individual has been accepted as a candidate, the Sgt At Arms (SAA) or Chapter Road Captain (CRC) will pair up the candidate with a mentor (senior level RC) who will be responsible for the education and development of a RCC. The candidate must then demonstrate certain skills and abilities to his or her mentor in order to become a fully qualified RC. The SAA and Chapter Executive Board (CEB) will make the final decision on readiness of the candidate and when to award the Chapter RC patch.

#### 2.1. Road Captain Candidate Prerequisites

The RCC shall meet the following prerequisites:

- Be a member in good standing of National CVMA®
- Be a member in good standing of the VA 27-3
- Have the approval of the SAA and the CEB

Once you have been qualified as a RC, you must ensure that you continue to meet these prerequisite requirements. If you do not, you will be removed from the RC roster.

#### 2.2. Qualifying as a Road Captain (RC)

The ideal number of rides to lead as a RCC before becoming a RC is 3 (2 as RC and 1 as Tail Gunner (TG)) with a minimum of 6 bikes, but the SAA and CEB can make the decision to present the candidate with the RC patch earlier than that if all parties are comfortable with their leading of rides. The SAA and CEB can also request for the candidate to lead more than 3 rides if all parties are not comfortable with their leading of rides.

##### 2.2.1 Lead Road Captain (LRC) Qualifications:

In order to qualify as a LRC, a RCC must demonstrate the ability to plan a ride. Planning a ride includes mapping out the route, organizing the timeline, giving the safety brief, and leading the group safely from the meet-up point to the final destination.

##### 2.2.2. Tail Gunner (TG) Qualifications

In order to qualify as a TG, a RCC must demonstrate the following skills/abilities to his or her assigned mentor. The mentor will notify the Chapter Road Captain (CRC) when a RCC has

# VA 27-3 Road Captain SOP

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completed this stage. The RCC shall demonstrate the ability to:

- Notice unsafe / improper group riding technique
- Instruct group riders in proper group riding technique during a ride
- Provide corrections to riders for issues will be done at stops or at the end of the ride. Issues include: following too close, following too far, not correcting a broken stagger, weaving, passing within the lane, showing off in an unsafe manner, etc.
- Demonstrate knowledge and proper use of Chapter 27-3 hand signals (Appendix A)
- Demonstrate the proper way to accomplish a lane change

## **2.3. Maintaining Road Captain Status**

To maintain the skills required of a RC, one must practice these skills on a regular bases by leading rides for the chapter. At the end of each riding season (typically in November) the SAA and CRC will review the mileage sheets to ensure each RC has performed duties on at least 2 rides: one as a RC and one as a TG. If a RC is unable to lead rides due to health issues or circumstances out of their control (i.e. deployments (Military or Civilian)) this will be taken into consideration at that time. The SAA/CEB will remove members from the RC roster on Jan 1<sup>st</sup> if these minimum requirements are not met.

## **2.4. Presentation of Road Captain Patch**

After a RCC meets all the requirements of becoming a RC and the SAA and CEB determines RC eligibility, every effort will be made to present the RC Patch to the candidate at a regularly scheduled Chapter meeting. This presentation will indicate to all members present that this individual has met the basic requirements of the position.

## **3.0. Responsibilities of Road Captains**

Every RC has certain basic responsibilities. Lead Road Captains (LRC) and Tail Gunners (TG) have responsibilities specific to their duties including Pre-ride planning, preparation, and road safety. This section details those responsibilities.

### **3.1. Responsibilities of the Chapter Road Captain**

The CRC will:

- Send out the next 4 weeks of rides to the Chapter Google Group email
- Ensure RCs are identified for each event and/or ride
- Update Road Captain SOP as required
- Assist SAA with mentoring RCCs and assigning mentors
- Ensure all needed RC forms and material to include a current RC roster with phone numbers are available

### **3.2. Basic Responsibilities of all Road Captains**

As a RC, you will be expected to:

- Assist in planning routes for Chapter rides
- Educate Chapter members about group riding techniques
- Inform Chapter members of hand signals used by the chapter on group rides
- Assist in obtaining attendance forms for Chapter rides
- Act as a LRC, aka: guide, for organized Chapter rides

# VA 27-3 Road Captain SOP

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- Act as a TG, aka: sweep, for organized Chapter rides
- Each RC is responsible to find a replacement if they are unable to fulfill any ride commitment. If the assigned RC and the SAA are unable to find a replacement the ride may be cancelled.

### 3.3. Responsibilities of a Lead Road Captain

The LRC will:

- Prepare and have written route directions for distribution to other RCs on the ride.
- Conduct a Pre-Ride brief for all riders.(see section 4.3.)
- Take charge of the group until the final destination has been reached.
- Plan enough time into your ride schedule to have a proper Pre-Ride brief and time to get to your destination while considering the possibility of traffic, weather, and other ride delays.
- If road conditions or weather dictate, the LRC may alter the ride route or destination. The LRC may also cancel the ride upon notifying the SAA and CRC.
- Separate large groups into smaller groups if possible. Group size should be kept to 10 or less bikes including the ride leaders.
- Position novice riders within group, ideally at the rear of the formation, or where the novice rider designates a preference.
- Make any judgment call needed to place riders with needs in specified groups.
- If needed, instruct any rider to ride in a specific position within the group, or to leave the group entirely, for reasons of misconduct, disorderly or unsafe riding, or faulty/unsafe equipment.
- Lead the group in a safe manner and execute sound judgment in situations not specifically covered in these guidelines.
- Forward a ride report to the SAA (cc the Chapter Commander) at the end of the ride indicating the Ride Name, LRC, TG, number of bikes, number of participants, total miles per rider, total miles and any significant problems that occurred during the ride.
- Identify any safety issues with any bike prior to departing on the planned ride.
- Be the final word for the ride; they are in charge

### 3.4. Responsibilities of a Tail Gunner

The TG will:

- Notify the LRC that the group is ready to depart for the ride.
- Be observant of any hazardous conditions or conduct, take immediate corrective action as appropriate, and inform the LRC at the earliest safe opportunity.
- In the event the group becomes separated either: a) move to the lead position of the rear group until reunited, or b) remain in the TG position and appoint another RC/rider to take the lead of the rear group.
- Respond to directions from the LRC.
- Identify a member to stop with any rider who has a problem and position them in front of the TG (Ideally someone with mechanical knowledge that can assist the rider and can relay to RC/TG the status of the bike).

### 3.5. Equipment

At a minimum, all RCs should carry or ensure that they have access to a cell phone, a well-stocked first aid kit, a basic tool kit, and all needed documents.

## **3.5.1. First Aid Kit**

RCs should carry a first aid kit consisting of the following: sterile gauze squares, antibacterial spray or ointment, clean water, and rolled gauze sufficient for administering minor first aid.

## **3.5.2. Tool Kit**

RCs should carry a basic tool kit, or identify the person with a toolkit, to assist others who may need to make minor repairs while on the ride. A recommended tool kit includes: assorted Hex Head wrenches, assorted Torx head wrenches, flat head and cross tip screw drivers, pliers, electrical tape, zip ties, and chem-lights or signal flares.

## **3.5.3. Documents**

Each RC should have the following:

- RC contact information
- Pre-ride Briefing Sheet (Appendix B)
- Route Map
- Emergency Phone Numbers

## **4.0. The Ride**

Every rider who chooses to participate in an official Chapter ride has a responsibility to:

- Show up on time to the meet-up
- Arrive with a full gas tank
- Keep a properly maintained motorcycle
- Wear all state-required safety equipment
- Read the Chapter's RC SOP and Chapter's Group Riding & Safety SOP
- Know the Chapters Hand and Arm Signals
- Listen to and follow the instructions of the RCs unless those instructions will put them or others in an unsafe situation
- Know the basic route

### **4.1. Meeting Place & Time**

RCs will determine the meeting place and time for their ride and publish the ride plan via Chapter Google Group. The briefing should cover the pre-ride brief and allow time to answer questions and/or concerns.

### **4.2. Ride Cancellation**

The decision to cancel a ride should be made a minimum of two hours prior to the briefing. After making the decision to cancel a ride, the LRC shall notify the SAA, Chapter Commander or XO in person or by telephone, and post to the Chapter Google Group. For rides cancelled less than 12 hours prior to the meetup time, the LRC shall ensure someone travels to the designated meeting location and any pick-up locations to ensure anyone who shows up for the ride is notified of the cancellation.

### **4.3. Pre-Ride Briefing**

At the stated meeting time the LRC or designee will conduct a briefing from the RC briefing sheet. This should be done as expeditiously as possible (typically 15 minutes prior to KSU). The

## VA 27-3 Road Captain SOP

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following talking points shall be covered prior to every ride (these are not in any particular order).

- All stated time intervals are minimums!
- Staggered Riding - 2 second interval from the bike in front of you and 1 second interval from the bike to your side.
- Stop Signs - double up (side by side), proceed through in pairs and then make separation.
- Stop Lights - stop if light turns regardless of your position in group unless there are road guards posted, in which case all riders proceed through traffic signal regardless of light color.
- Separation from the group - If occurs, the LRC will slow down and/or find a safe place to pull off and wait for the rest of the group to catch up. The TG or other RCs within the group may have to take the lead until caught back up. Make sure all RCs know directions and destination.
- Lane Changes - Instruct riders: pass the signal (hand and/or light) back, do not move over, the TG will change position to hold the lane, then the group will move over from the back to the front once the lane is clear. Inform riders that LRC could cancel the lane change if needed.
- Immediate Lane Changes - The LRC may initiate a lane change prior to notifying the TG if the situation requires it. All riders will follow safely regardless if vehicles end up within the group. Riders will exercise safety while rejoining the group.
- Passing: Always using riders own judgment. Safety FIRST!
  - One lane each direction
  - Multilane with Big Rigs
  - Any vehicle on an adjoining shoulder
- Hand Signals - minimally the bold signals should be covered.
  - **Left Turn**
  - **Right Turn**
  - **Stop**
  - **Slow Down**
  - **Speed Up**
  - **Single File**
  - **Staggered**
  - **Obstacle left**
  - **Obstacle right**
  - Pull Off
  - Blinker On
  - High Beam
  - Gas
  - Food
  - Comfort Stop
- Return Route/Way Home – repeat from initial brief. Ask if any individuals will be departing the destination prior to the group departure or staying later than the group (this ensures no one is unintentionally left behind).
- If equipped, have all riders turn passing lamps (spots) off, except for the TG.
- Equipment failure (Breakdown) - TG (or designated individual) will attend to the broke-down bike and rider. The LRC will pull over when safe. The TG (or designated individual) will contact the LRC and determine the actions that will follow.
- Accidents - Preemptively identify who will, if needed, call emergency numbers, handle traffic, stay at scene, and perform first-aid. The LRC will be the focal point to make decisions. The LRC is the final word for that ride; **they are in charge**. Any problems or issues should be

# VA 27-3 Road Captain SOP

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communicated to him/her as soon as possible.

## 4.4. Riding Guidelines

- The LRC will wait at stop signs until the TG has stopped so the LRC and TG can communicate via hand signals or electronic communications (if available).
- LRC will use hand signals as needed and will re-issue hand signals if required after stops.
- In the event of a serious safety issue, the TG shall signal the LRC via headlight, hand signals or electronic communications (if available) to make an immediate stop to correct the issue.

## 4.5. Riding Formations

There are only two basic formations used for all rides with the staggered formation being the primary. At no time while in the staggered formation shall a rider switch lane positions in order to fill a gap. The next rider behind the gap will fill forward only when signaled forward by the next rider in formation. The ONLY exception to this is if you are the last bike directly in front of the TG.

### 4.5.1. Environmental Conditions

Environmental conditions may dictate that the LRC places the group into a single file formation. Environmental considerations may include, but are not limited to:

- Road width
- Presence of frequent or tight curves (normally back roads)
- Road conditions (construction, sand, gravel, pot holes, etc.)
- Vehicles on the side of the road (bicycles, emergency, disabled, etc.)
- Weather

### 4.5.2. Staggered Formation

The staggered formation, signaled by the LRC by a hand signal above the head with the index and little finger extended, consists of riders, alternately, in the right and left halves of the travel lane. All riders in the left half of the lane should have a two (2) second separation. All riders in the right half of the lane should have a two (2) second separation. All riders should have a one second separation to the nearest bike, right or left, to them.

### 4.5.3. Single File

The single file formation, signaled by a hand signal above the head with the index finger only extended, is used when environmental conditions prevent use of the Staggered Formation. All riders will slow slightly to allow a two (2) second separation from the rider in front of them. Each rider may now use the entire lane. LRC will signal when to return to the staggered position.

## 4.6. Hand Signals

Hand signals will be used at all times to maneuver the group, change formation, or point out hazards. Hand signals should be given in a timely manner but not so early or late that they are meaningless or unnecessary. The LRC will initiate all hand signals with the exception of pointing out hazards. Any rider in the group, in any position, upon becoming aware of a hazard, should point out the hazard to all riders that follow. When the LRC issues a hand signal, he or she shall hold the hand signal until the rider behind the LRC performs the signal. Upon seeing the signal

# VA 27-3 Road Captain SOP

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relayed back, the LRC may then resume riding with two hands. Each subsequent rider will maintain the hand signal until the rider behind acknowledges receipt by also performing the hand signal. The TG will perform the hand signal to signal the traffic that follows.

## CAUTION

**DO NOT MAINTAIN OR PERFORM ANY HAND SIGNALS IF SAFETY REQUIRES TWO HANDS ON YOUR HANDLEBARS**

### 4.7. Traffic Lanes

The group shall stay in a single traffic lane whenever possible. The LRC will pick a lane where the flow of traffic is consistent with the speed of the group. In an urban environment, the LRC should consider the distance to the next turn on the ride route and the direction of that turn when deciding which lane to utilize. On limited access roads with more than two travel lanes in each direction, the LRC should avoid using the right lane as a travel lane to avoid merging traffic. On limited access roads with only two travel lanes in each direction, the group will normally travel in the number two (right) lane unless the LRCs believes the frequency of access ramps would likely cause a disruption to the group from merging traffic. Lane changes will be kept to a minimum and only used to pass slower traffic or to avoid road hazards.

#### 4.7.1. Lane Changes in Detail

A lane change refers to maneuvering the group into a new travel lane where the direction of traffic in the new lane is in the same direction of travel of the group. Lane changes may be performed for a wide variety of reasons including passing slower traffic, maneuvering the group into a lane where the traffic speed is the same as the group wishes to travel, or in preparation for turning onto an intersecting roadway or exiting a freeway. Lane changes should be kept to a minimum and, whenever possible, should be well thought out in advance to minimize the disruption to the group. The LRC will initiate lane changes by signaling the TG by hand signal and the motorcycle's turn signal. Upon receipt of the lane change signal, the TG will show the hand signal for following traffic and, when safe to do so, the TG will move into the middle half of the new lane. Each rider, in turn, will then follow suit and maneuver into the new travel lane. The LRC can cancel the intended lane change if needed. This is noted by a back and forth hand signal at the neck, similar to that used to signal shutdown of engines. Subsequent riders will hold their positions and pass the signal back.

## NOTE

**IF THE LANE CHANGE IS REQUIRED FOR EITHER SAFETY REASONS (E.G., HAZARD IN THE CURRENT TRAVEL LANE) OR BECAUSE THE RIDE ROUTE REQUIRES (EXITING A FREEWAY OR A TURN ONTO AN INTERSECTING STREET) AND TRAFFIC DOES NOT PERMIT A LANE CHANGE IN THE ABOVE DESCRIBED MANNER, THE LEAD ROAD CAPTAIN MAY INITIATE THE LANE CHANGE WITHOUT WAITING FOR THE TG. ALL SUBSEQUANT RIDERS SHALL THEN FOLLOW INTO THE NEW TRAVEL LANE, AS INDIVIDUALS, WHEN SAFE TO DO SO, EVEN IF THAT MEANS AUTOMOBILES MAY END UP IN THE MIDDLE OF THE GROUP. WHEN SAFE THE GROUP WILL REASSEMBLE.**

### 4.8. Breakdown/Accidents

In the event of a breakdown or an accident, all riders behind the motorcycle(s) involved in the incident will pull over to the side of the road where safe to do so. The LRC will find a safe place to

# VA 27-3 Road Captain SOP

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pull over the rest of the group that was in front of the accident. The TG and/or another RC will assess the situation and assign individuals to help as needed to block oncoming traffic or call for emergency services. The LRC must be contacted to inform him or her of the situation. Once the situation has been assessed and stabilized, a RC will proceed or designate another member to lead the rest of the riders, those who are not required to stay and help, to join up with the LRC's group. If any injuries occur during an official chapter ride, notify the Chapter Leadership and the LRC. Please note that only police can take a witness report. When the situation has been resolved and the ride is ready to proceed, ensure that everyone is accounted for and **NO ONE** is left behind.

## **4.9 .Ride De-Brief**

All members are expected to identify any issues to the group. This should be done in a courteous, professional manner in order to maximize benefit of lessons learned. During the ride a Hot Wash will be conducted (Appendix C Ride Hot Wash). This should be conducted prior to the group breaking for home, i.e. last fuel stop or break area.

## **5.0. Accountability**

Individuals can return home at any time and by any route you choose. If departing before or staying later than the group, inform the LRC/TG of your intentions so they are not looking for you when the group is ready to leave. If you are unsure how to get back home, ask a RC for directions. After you arrive at home, let the RC know you are home safe, preferably by E-mail (Chapter Google Group) with total miles. .

## **6.0. Mentoring**



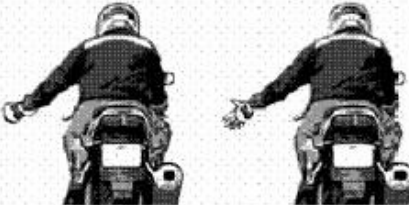
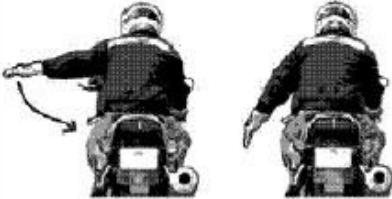


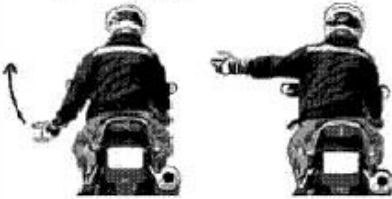
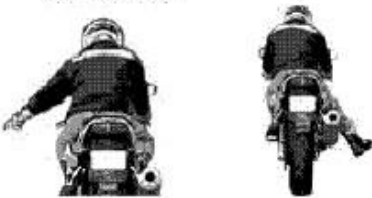





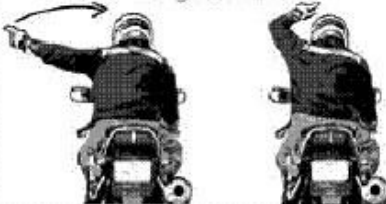
Road Captain Candidates may either choose or be assigned a mentor from the cadre of experienced RCs by the SAA. The mentors shall work to educate and train the new volunteer RCCs ensuring that he or she is familiar with the RC SOP and the VA 27-3 Group Riding and Safety SOP.

Are there items that need to be addressed in the SOP? If so, Inform the SAA and/or CRC.

This SOP was reviewed and approved by the CEB on 27 October, 2020.



**Appendix A**  
**MSF's Guide to Group Riding: Hand Signals**

<p><b>Stop</b> - arm extended straight down, palm facing back</p> 	<p><b>Single File</b> - arm and index finger extended straight up</p> 	<p><b>Turn Signal On</b> - open and close hand with fingers and thumb extended</p> 
<p><b>Slow Down</b> - arm extended straight out, palm facing down</p> 	<p><b>Double File</b> - arm with index and middle finger extended straight up</p> 	<p><b>Fuel</b> - arm out to side pointing to tank with finger extended</p> 
<p><b>Speed Up</b> - arm extended straight out, palm facing up</p> 	<p><b>Hazard in Roadway</b> - on the right, point with right foot; on the left, point with left hand</p> 	<p><b>Refreshment Stop</b> - fingers closed, thumb to mouth</p> 
<p><b>You Lead/Come</b> - arm extended upward 45 degrees, palm forward pointing with index finger, swing in arc from back to front</p> 	<p><b>Highbeam</b> - tap on top of helmet with open palm down</p> 	<p><b>Comfort Stop</b> - forearm extended, fist clenched with short up and down motion</p> 
<p><b>Follow Me</b> - arm extended straight up from shoulder, palm forward</p> 	<p><b>Pull Off</b> - arm positioned as for right turn, forearm swing toward shoulder</p> 	

# VA 27-3 Road Captain SOP

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## Appendix B PRE-RIDE BRIEF

Destination: \_\_\_\_\_

Road Captain: \_\_\_\_\_ Tail Gunner: \_\_\_\_\_

2<sup>nd</sup> Group RC: \_\_\_\_\_ Tail Gunner: \_\_\_\_\_

Route will be: \_\_\_\_\_

Departure Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Expected Arrival Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Return Departure Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Expected Expenses (Tolls): \_\_\_\_\_

### Important Phone Numbers:

Chapter Commander: Rainman - 845-527-8895      Chapter XO: Doc - 804-721-8193

Chapter Sgt At Arms: StoneCold - 540-207-7353      Chapter Sec: Bandit - 603-730-2205

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- ID Riders with 1st Aid Kit.
  - ID New Rider(s).
  - Identify individuals intending to returning or staying after group departure from the destination.
  - Brief Cell Phone Numbers for RCs.
  - Expected Ride Speeds (Preferable no more 5 miles over posted speed limits).
  - We will ride in a staggered formation unless safety or road conditions require single file.
  - Review Breakdown Procedures.
  - Be attentive to, and pass back to the next rider, all signals from the RC.
  - The RC (or the Group Leaders if the group becomes separated) will make all decisions concerning the route, speed, lane of travel, etc. These are not suggestions! Follow the RC or leave the ride if you feel your safety is at risk.
  - **YOU** are responsible for your own safety!

# VA 27-3 Road Captain SOP

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## **Appendix C Ride Hot Wash**

The purpose of the Hot Wash is to improve the group riding experience.

All members are expected to identify any issues to the group.

This should be done in a courteous, professional manner in order to maximize benefit of lessons learned.

Discuss three positive things about the ride:

Discuss three items that needs improvement in the ride: