



AMERICAN LEGION RIDERS DEPARTMENT OF VIRGINIA RIDER SAFETY and TRAINING HANDBOOK

PART OF:



1.0: 2021



Greetings Rider,

Welcome to the American Legion Riders – Department of Virginia. We want you to enjoy your experience as a member of the ALR, which means riding safely. Please take time to review

the safety and training information in this handbook, and we hope to see you out on the road!

Ride Safe!
Andrew Johnson
Safety & Training Officer
American Legion Riders
Department of Virginia-2021

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"American Legion Riders as a National Program"

FROM RESOLUTION 35 AS VOTED ON BY THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE AMERICAN LEGION ON OCTOBER 17-18, 2007 AND AMENDED BY RESOLUTION 32 BY THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE AMERICAN LEGION ON MAY 4-5, 2011

All American Legion Rider groups must be a program supported by a Post or Department of The American Legion and shall uphold the declared principles of The American Legion as well as conform to and abide by the regulations and decisions of the Department, Post or other duly constituted Department governing body.

The following guidelines are recommended for The ALR program of The American Legion:

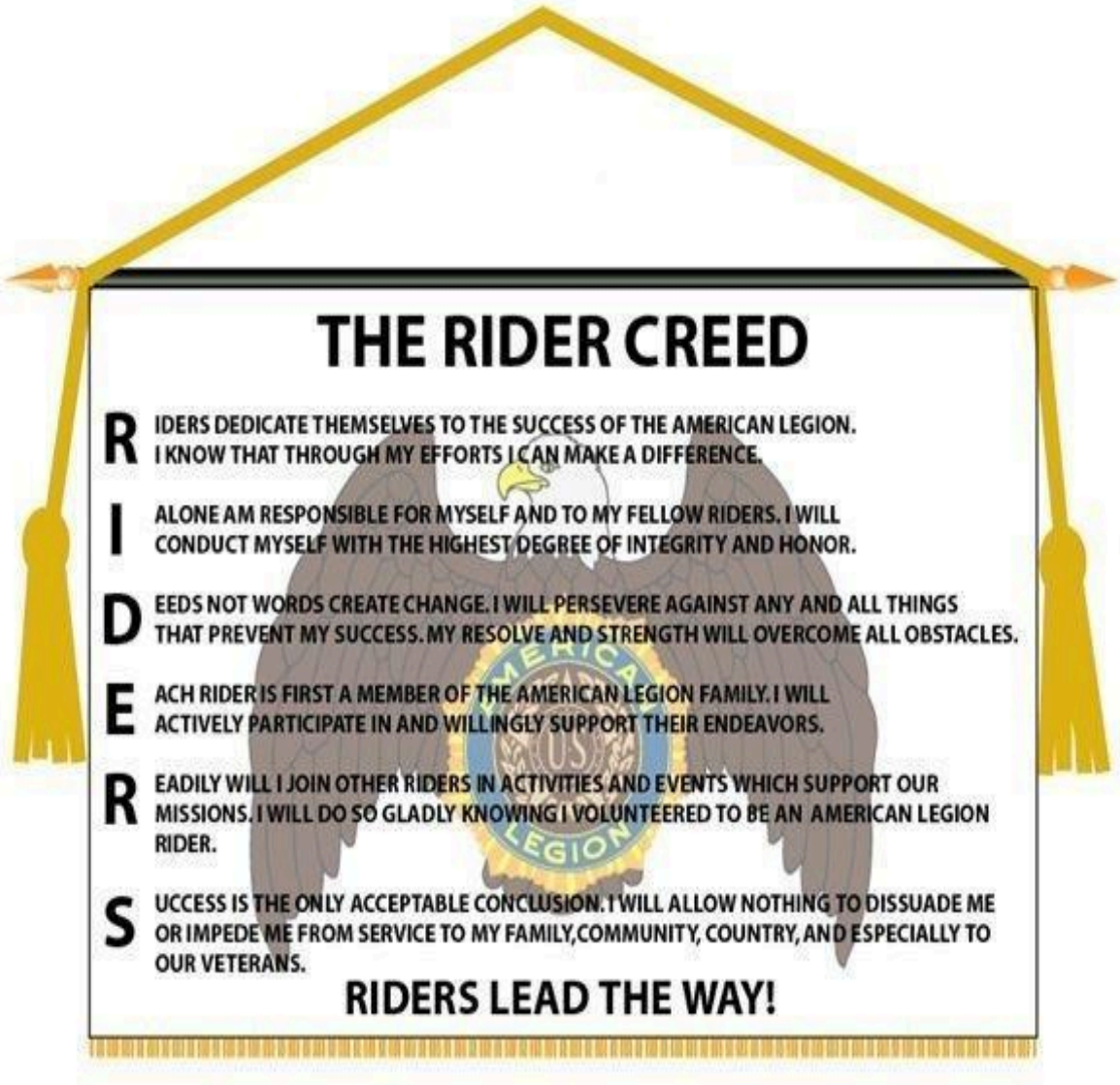
1. All members of The American Legion Riders shall be current members of The American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary or Sons of The American Legion
2. **Each ALR member shall establish and maintain membership by owning, individually or through marriage, a motorcycle licensed and insured as required by state law**
3. **ALR programs may allow for continued membership for those members who have given up motorcycle ownership because of age, illness, injury, or other reasons outside the member's control**
4. All ALR members shall strive to maintain the image of The American Legion, at all times upholding The American Legion name and emblem, which symbolizes the integrity and principles of this great organization
5. All the ALR groups shall avoid the perception of being a "motorcycle club" or biker club"
6. The only recognized The American Legion Rider logo is that which is copyrighted and sold through The American Legion National Emblem sales
7. All Members will obey the motorcycle laws of their state
8. No use of rockers with the ALR patch because touching the patch violates trademark laws of the ALR patch

9. Sponsoring organization (Post and Department) will review liability insurance coverage to ensure that adequate coverage is available to cover the organization to include coverage for any specific special riding events.

American Legion Rider groups shall abide by The American Legion Constitution and By-laws as well as the established Post and Department directives. The American Legion National Headquarters and the respective Departments shall maintain general oversight of ALR Program as regards to proper use of the name and emblem of The American Legion, ALR and The American Legion Legacy Run, and compliance with the National Constitution and By-Laws of The American Legion.

Bold fields indicate what was amended by Resolution 32, May 4-5, 2011

RIDER CREED



MOTORCYCLES

There are many different types, styles, sizes, colors and brands of motorcycles available to the individual rider, and personal preference, style of riding, and level of comfort are factors to be considered when purchasing a bike. All these types of bikes are allowed by the ALR.





Touring

Cruiser





Sport

Standard





Chopper Trike

LICENSING, REGISTRATION and INSURANCE

To operate a motorcycle, one must possess special knowledge and skills beyond what is required to operate a four-wheeled vehicle, such as a car or truck.

In you are a resident of the State of Virginia, and you own and operate a motorcycle, you must have the following:

-Valid Virginia Driver's License with Motorcycle Endorsement

-Virginia Vehicle Title

-Virginia Registration Card

-Virginia License Plate

- Insurance

Before you can register your motorcycle in the State of Virginia, you must certify that it is insured with a company authorized to do business in Virginia. All vehicles registered in Virginia must remain insured during the entire registration period.

Your license must be a valid Virginia Driver's License with a **Class M Endorsement**, or a motorcycle driver's license. There are restrictions for those riders holding only a "learners permit," to limited hours of operation, and only under supervision. (See: dmv.NOW.com)

NOTE: All American Legion Riders must be properly and legally licensed, registered, and insured at all times.

AMERICAN LEGION RIDER REQUIREMENTS

All members of The American Legion Riders shall be current members of The American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary or Sons of The American Legion

Each MC-licensed ALR member shall establish and maintain membership by owning, individually or through marriage, a motorcycle licensed and insured as required by state law

ALR programs may allow for continued membership for those members who have given up motorcycle ownership because of age, illness, injury, or other reasons outside the member's control.

RISK AWARENESS, ACCEPTANCE & MANAGEMENT

It is a well-known fact that riding a motorcycle is dangerous, and anyone who does not acknowledge that fact has no reason to be riding. Motorcycles are fun, and a great way to commute, or travel. There risks associated with riding a motorcycle that are not encountered when operating cars and trucks, to include, but not limited to:

1. Motorcycles do not have the stability of cars because they must be balanced
2. Motorcycles leave you more vulnerable in a crash because there is less protection.
3. Motorcycles are not as readily seen as cars, trucks or other motor vehicles because of their size.
4. Other motorists, particularly those who don't ride a motorcycle (and even some who do), may not be looking for motorcycles in traffic.

Many motorcycle riders are of the opinion that it is the "other" driver's responsibility to see them on their bike. This is a bad thought process, which often results in near misses, verbal confrontations, and accidents. Riders mist always keep their head on a swivel, and be aware of what larger vehicles are doing around them. Dark-colored bikes, and riders in dark clothing can too easily be "lost" in low-light, rain and fog conditions, and in vehicle "blind-spots. Remember, it a car -vs- motorcycle situation, the car almost always "win," and safety in traffic is a responsibility shared by everyone!

When we accept "risk," we must first evaluate ourselves, and ask ourselves how much risk are we willing to accept? We have all seen self-proclaimed "expert riders," who are a hazard to everyone on the road. They assume they are the expert, and everyone else on the road is an amateur. Only when a rider thinks about the risks of riding in traffic can they successfully manage the variety of factors that happen while riding, and choosing to accept the challenges of being a responsible motorcyclist means to think about the consequences.

Knowledge of what cause crashes is helpful in managing the complexity of riding situations. What are some of the primary causes of motorcycle crashes? They include, but are not limited to:

-Speeding
-Inattention
-Distraction
-Fatigue
-Drinking/intoxication
-Drugs: Illegal and Prescription
-Simple carelessness

Motorcycle crashes are usually caused by multiple factors, which often makes it difficult to accurately pinpoint the "primary" cause. So, when riding, be aware that here is rarely a "single cause," but rather an intersection of factors that accumulate, and at some point, they come together in such a way to produce a crash. It has been noted recently, that many law enforcement and safety professionals are avoiding using the word "accident," as most crashes are predictable, and preventable.

Riders must therefore, learn and practice "Risk Management," each and every time they go "kickstands-up." MSF lists a key element needed to be described as a "good motorcyclist" or "good rider," is the "*desire and motivation to choose to reduce risk while riding*." This requires actual superior riding skills, and positive mental attitude.

All riders should have a personal "riding strategy," or way of thinking and planning to avoid trouble, coupled with a good attitude, and allowing themselves a "margin of error," or how much time and space they need given their personal skill level.

MSF recommends a simple strategy, the acronym of which is "S.E.E." This acronym stands for:

Search: For factors that might lead to risky situations
Evaluate: How the factors might interact to create risk
Execute: An action to maintain a margin of safety

Risk Awareness, Acceptance and Management is the responsibility of each-and-every Rider out on the road. MSF reminds us:

> *"To SEE is to ask yourself such questions as: What's the other person going to do? What is that car doesn't see me? What if there's gravel in that curve ahead? What if that car doesn't yield at that intersection?" These everyday riding situations have something in common: if a strategy for dealing with them isn't employed, they can easily lead to a crash. To put it simply, you must continually* ***SEE****."*

BASIC RIDING SKILLS

All Legion Riders must be legally licensed, and possess a motorcycle license or motorcycle endorsement. It is assumed that if a Rider has been legally licensed by a state department of motor vehicles (DMV), they will possess at least the basic riding skills which were required of them to pass that testing in order to obtain their licensing.

Motorcycle riders in Virginia must adhere to the requirements as set forth in the Virginia Motorcycle Operator Handbook, from the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles, which covers the following topics:

-Licensing Requirements
-Control for Safety
-See and Be Seen
-Keeping Your Distance
-Handling dangerous Surfaces
-Riding at Night
-Dealing with Emergencies
-Carrying Passengers and Cargo
-Group Riding
-Being in Shape to Ride
-Your Motorcycle
-Earning Your License
-Rider Skills Training

SKILLS TESTING

The Virginia Motorcycle Operator Manual, from the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles, clearly states:

"You should be familiar with your motorcycle and the basic operating skills necessary for your safety before going on a street with other traffic. To make sure you have the basic skills to ride, you will be required to take a skills test on your motorcycle to obtain your license."

The above statement applies to new Riders in Virginia, but the requirements should apply to everyone who possesses a motorcycle license endorsement, regardless of when and where obtained. Proper clothing and safety gear, vehicle inspection, licensing and registration, and skill testing are critical for all riders, and should be reviewed annually to access the ability to continue riding safely. Just because a rider passed a test ten, twenty, or more years ago, does not mean they are skilled today. Riders who only ride a few times each year will be less skilled than those who ride often. Conversely, individuals who ride "every day," may have picked up bad habits, which if tested as if they were a beginner, would be cause for failure in their testing, and not being granted an endorsement.

Continuous evaluation of personal Rider skills, and advanced training are critical for the individual Rider. There are always new riding tips and tricks available to Riders as they continue to home their riding skills.

A good exercise for all Riders is to obtain a copy of Virginia's Motorcycle Skills Test Sheet from the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles, and practice the exercises listed on the sheet as a refresher. The four (4) exercises list are, as follows:

-Exercise One: *"Tests your ability to control the motorcycle while turning and to perform a precise stop. You will be evaluated on your ability to stay within the path of the turn and stop in the painted box without skidding the motorcycle."*

-Exercise Two: *"Tests your ability to control the motorcycle at low speed while weaving through cones and to make a U-turn in a designated area. You will be evaluated on your ability to stay within the path of travel without touching lines or cones and without putting your foot down."*

-Exercise Three: *"Tests your ability to brake quickly and safely in the shortest possible distance. You will be evaluated on stopping distance in relation to speed of travel."*

-Exercise Four: *"Tests your ability to swerve the motorcycle quickly to avoid an obstacle in your path. You will be evaluated on your ability to stay within the path of travel and swerve quickly without touching a boundary line."*

TRAINING

Every rider on the road should have experienced some type of professional initial basic rider training ("Rider Course"), which normally consists of approximately 15 hours of classroom and "on-cycle" instruction, designed to increase rider safety and awareness.

New riders, and those who have been away from riding for an extended period of time, regardless of previous experience, should avail themselves of this professional training. Basic and advanced courses are offered by various training organizations.

Riders need to learn basics of riding, such as how to operate a motorcycle: Starting, turning, shifting, braking, stopping, object avoidance, etc., before moving on to more advanced skills such as high and slow speed turning and cornering, riding in rain, snow, and fog. Evasive maneuvering. etc.

Riders also need to be aware of the risks involved in riding, and the protective gear available to keep them safe. They must also be made aware of street strategies, avoiding alcohol and drug use while riding, and other special situations encountered when riding. Successful completion of a safety course does not guarantee that a rider will be safe on the road. Only the riders themselves can decide that.

Some of the courses and resources include, but are not limited to:

APEX: www.ApexCycleEducation.com

Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF): www.msf-usa.org

Motorcycle Safety League of Virginia

Virginia Motorcycle Rider Training Program www.dmvNOW.com

MSF: Basic Rider Course (Handbook)

MSF: "The Intersection" (DVD)

MSF: "MSF Guide to Group Riding" (DVD)

MSF: "Riding Straight" (DUI simulation)

MSF: "The Seasoned Rider" (DVD and simulation)

MSF: "MSF's Guide to Motorcycling Excellence" (Book)

PROTECTIVE SAFETY GEAR

Wearing the "right" gear means that the gear will protect you. Whenever any Virginia Legion Riders are participating in any Legion sanctioned ride, or representing the American Legion Riders, they must wear an approved helmet. If you are involved in a crash, you have a much better chance of surviving serious injury if you are, at a minimum, wearing:

-An approved helmet, with Face and Eye Protection
-Protective Clothing
-Sturdy footwear

HELMETS:

Things to consider:

-Helmets are designed to protect your head, without obstructing your vision. Urban myths abound regarding riders being unable to see in their peripheral vision due to helmets blocking their sight line. If this occurs, it is because either the helmet is not DOT (or higher) approved, or there is something seriously wrong with the rider's head and they should seek medical assessment.

A national assessment was conducted on more than 900 motorcycle crashes, where 40 % of the riders wore helmets, and failed to find even one case where a helmet kept a rider from seeing danger.

-Slow-speed crashes (>30mph) account for the majority of crashes, and at those speeds, wearing a helmet dramatically cuts the severity, and number of head injuries by 50%!

-The majority of crashes usually occur on trips of 5 miles or less, and usually right after starting out.

-Un-helmeted riders are three-times more likely to die from head injuries than those riders wearing a helmet at the time of a crash.

Types of Helmets and Helmet Selection:

There are different types and styles of helmets, some of which provide much better protection than others. There are half-helmets ("Beanies"), Three-Quarter helmets, and Full-Face Helmets. Whichever style a Rider chooses, it must:

-Meet U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) and State of Virginia standards. Helmets with labels from the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), or the Snell Memorial Foundation, or the European ECE Ratings, as follows:

DOT: Standards determined by the U.S. Department of Transportation. The DOT rating currently in effect is federal standard FMVSS 218, and any helmet with the DOT sticker should meet these standards (more on that later).

ECE: Standards determined by the Economic Commission for Europe. This multinational standard is used by more than 50 countries in Europe, and any helmet with this sticker must meet the current ECE 22.05 standard.

SNELL: Standards determined by the Snell Memorial Foundation. This is a voluntary testing procedure, and is only required by certain race bodies. The current standard is SNELL M2015 for street-use helmets, and SA2015 for race-use helmets.

-If you are riding with a helmet that does not have at least one of the above "stickers," you should confirm that you are NOT riding with a "fake" helmet.

-Helmet look-alikes that do not have a DOT or ECE sticker are known as "novelty" helmets. These so-called "helmets" are unsafe, offer zero protection to the rider's head, and are illegal to wear while riding in areas or circumstances where helmet use is legally required, such as in the State of Virginia, and on all American Legion Rides.

-Your helmet(s) can pass one, two, or even all three standards, so you may have a helmet that is just DOT, or DOT and SNELL, or DOT and ECE approved, etc.

-Recently a fourth testing body has entered the motorcycle helmet market. The SHARP helmet safety scheme does not provide certifications, but instead assigns a "star rating" to European-model lids.

-Helmets straps must be fastened, and the helmet must fit snugly all the way around the rider's head.

-Helmets must be free of any obvious defects, cracks, loose padding, and/or frayed straps. Not all helmet damage is obvious. If a helmet is dropped or hits a hard surface, it should be inspected by a professional for damage.

NOTE: No "decorative, display, or novelty" helmets, or use of fake DOT Stickers is allowed to be worn by a any Department of Virginia American Legion Rider, or ride participant, when representing the American Legion Riders.

EYE PROTECTION:

All Legion Riders must have some type of proper eye protection when riding. The most common eye protection comes in the form of goggles, glasses, face shields, and/or windshields. You must protect your eyes from foreign objects, which can be painful, and cause distraction which leads to an accident. You need to be able to maintain your full attention to the road, and riding safely.

Things to consider:

-Goggles, though considered a bit "old school," will protect your eyes from wind, dust, rain, insects and stones thrown up from other vehicles, but, they won't protect your face like a face shield.

-Face shields can protect your whole face from the above items, and in the event of an accident.

-Windshields are not a complete substitute for a face shield or goggles, as they will not always protect your eyes from the wind, but then, neither will eyeglasses or sunglasses.

-Glasses or sunglasses won't help to keep your eyes from watering, and can blow off your head if not securely fitted. If glasses are worn, they need to be shatter-proof rated for riding, in case they are struck by a hard, flying object.

-Whatever eye protection, or combination of eye protection you wear, to be truly effective it must:

-Be made of shatter-proof material
-Be free of scratches
-Fasten securely so it can't blow off
-Give a clear view to either side
-Allow air to pass through to prevent fogging
-Allow enough room for eyeglasses or sunglasses, if needed.
-No sunglasses or any other tinted eye protection should be worn at night or during limited light conditions.

CLOTHING:

All Legion Riders should be aware that proper motorcycle riding safety clothing can protect you in a crash, and greatly reduce injury. Besides your helmet, your clothing is you best defense against injury from weather, flying objects, and in a crash.

Things to consider:

-Clothing should be worn in layers, and adjusted based on weather conditions. Common sense would dictate that more layers are required when it gets cold, or it starts raining. In the "old days," motorcycle riders didn't have many options to choose from; it was mostly leather and denim. Today however, we have all sorts of great options.

-Jackets and pants should cover your body, arms and legs completely without flapping in the wind, yet loose enough to "breathe." Leather and denim are still an option, but there is a myriad of new, sturdy synthetic materials available. Most of today's protective clothing come with extra protective padding for elbows, backs, hips, knees, etc., and are vented for airflow when riding in warmer weather.

-Gloves are to be worn at all times when riding, as they give riders better grip on the controls, and protect hands from flying objects, and in a crash. They should be constructed of leather or another heavy material. Waterproof gloves such as Gore-tex™/Thinsulate™ style riding gloves should be worn when riding during cold and/or wet riding conditions

-Shorts, tennis shoes, sandals, and other like items are never to be worn by Legion Riders, as they do not provide adequate protection. Long-sleeved shirts are always preferred to protect arms against sun/wind burn, and flying objects.

-Boots and shoes should be high enough to cover a rider's ankles, and sturdy enough to give them support. The soles should be constructed of hard, durable material capable of holding a rider's foot in place once it is put down on a stop. Heels should be short, so they don't catch on rough surfaces. If the boots or shoes utilize laces, the laces must be tucked-in so as not to catch on the motorcycle or any other object. Once again, NO tennis shoes, moccasins, sandals, flip-flops, etc. are to be worn by Rider's.

<u>SAFETY CLOTHING and APPROPRIATE WEATHER GEAR</u>:

There is nothing more miserable than riding in extreme weather conditions, be it crossing a desert in 100º+ heat, a sudden show squall with freezing temperatures, or a cold driving rain. All weather should be considered whenever a Rider goes "Kickstands-Up," or else they are just tempting fate.

-Things to consider:

-Face protection is always an issue when it comes to avoiding sun/wind burn, freezing temperatures, or driving rain. A full-face helmet is one way to do it. Bandannas, balaclavas, and facemasks may also help.

-Eye protection is vital! If you can't see, you can't ride! Proper "EyePro" must, at a minimum, provide your eyes adequate protection against wind, weather, and flying objects. "Regular" off-the-shelf sunglasses, and "Regular" prescription eyeglasses DO NOT adequately protect your eyes in the event they are struck by items thrown up into your face, as they are not shatter-proof. Proper EyePro must consist of eyewear specifically safety-rated and designed to protect your eyes in the event they are struck by an object while you are riding a motorcycle at speed on any roadway. Do not skimp on your eye protection . . . it may save your sight, and your life!

-Waterproof gloves such as Gore-Tex™/Thinsulate™ style riding gloves should be worn when riding during cold and/or wet riding conditions, and if possible, should be of a bright color, visible to other drivers in conditions of poor visibility

-Helmets with bright colors are highly recommended. The brighter the color, the easier they are to be seen by other drivers, especially at night, and during inclement weather, and other low-light conditions. Reflective trim (e.g. 3M tape) along the rim of the helmet can appear black in daylight, but reflect white, orange, yellow etc., when struck by headlight beams at night, thus making the rider more visible.

-Helmet Removal stickers and cards: The "RIDER ALERT MOTORCYCLE-SAFETY PROGRAM" was launched in Richmond, Virginia on April 12, 2011. *"The program, designed to help save lives, provide free identification data cards that will help first responders provide rapid and accurate medical assistance to motorcyclists involved in serious accidents."* Rider Alert cards are placed inside riders' helmets and contain vital, life-saving information, emergency contact and any important medical history. When first responders arrive on the scene of a motorcycle accident, a one-inch, round sticker on the outside of the helmet will indicate that the biker has a Rider Alert card. The sticker also warns bystanders not to remove the helmet, which could prevent further injury. The program was started by the Richmond Ambulance Authority and Bon Secours Virginia Health System in partnership with "Motorcycle Virginia!" and was the first of its kind in the United States. Rider Alert has expanded across the U.S.

-A bright-colored safety vest, such as the American Legion Riders vest available from Flag and Emblem sales, should be worn at night, and during all times of low visibility due to snow, rain, fog, smoke, etc.

-Crash jackets and crash pants, with reflective materials, specifically made to protect you in case you go down on the road, should always be worn, but especially during any inclement weather when risk increases. It's better to be seen, then trying to look like a "biker."

-The Virginia Motorcycle Operator Manual, from the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) suggest all riders should **"See and Be Seen,"** as follows:

> ***"Drivers may not see you:*** *In crashes with motorcyclists, car drivers often say that they never saw the motorcycle. It's hard to see something you're not looking for, and most drivers are not looking for motorcycles. Also, from ahead or from behind, a motorcycles outline is much smaller than a car. Even if a driver sees you coming, you aren't necessarily safe.*

> *Because you and your bike are smaller than other vehicles, it's easier for others to mistake your distance and speed. However, you can do many things to make it easier for others to recognize you and your cycle."*

> ***"Clothing:*** *Most crashes occur in broad daylight. If you don't wear bright clothing, you greatly increase your risk of not being seen during the day. Remember, your body is half of the visible surface area of the rider/cycle unit. Clothing that helps you be seen includes bright orange, yellow or green jackets or vests. And your helmet can do more than protect you in a crash. If it is brightly colored; it can help others see you. Any bright color is better than drab or dark colors. Fluorescent clothing (helmet and jacket or vest) is best for daytime riding. At night, it is best to wear reflective gear. Reflective material on the sides of helmet and vest will help drivers coming up from the side to spot you. Reflective material can also be a big help for drivers coming towards you on the road ahead or from behind."*

> ***"Headlight:*** *The best way to help others on the road see your motorcycle is to keep the headlight on – at all times (Note: Legal requirement). Studies show that, during the day, a motorcycle with lights off is twice as likely to go unnoticed by other road users. Also, use of the high beam in daylight increases the likelihood that you will be seen by oncoming drivers."*

-Riding in hot weather can cause dehydration and sluggish thoughts, which severely hinder your ability to operate a motorcycle. Riders should become

familiar with the effects of hot weather riding on the body; consider how human bodies exchange heat with their surroundings through conduction, convection, radiation and evaporation. Though argued by many, wearing a short-sleeved tee-shirt versus a ventilated crash jacket, does not necessarily keep you cooler, as warm air passing across a rider's skin robs the body of sweat, which is a cooling agent, and exposes the rider to sun and wind burn. A quality, ventilated crash jacket, crash pants, gloves and helmet, can actually keep you cooler, and better protected, even in hot weather.

-Wicking undergarments have also been found to be highly effective for wear in extreme weather conditions

-Riding in cold weather has its own issues, as the body needs to maintain it's core temperature. Cold hands and feet are indicators that the body is robbing blood to feed the core, which can lead to serious issues. In cold weather a rider's clothing must keep them warm, as well as protect them from injury.

Good quality crash jackets and pants, with layered clothing beneath, and warm gloves, socks and boots, are the best protection against the cold. Layers can be added or removed as the temperature range changes during the day or night. Hypothermia is a serious, and potentially deadly threat!

-Riding in wet, or cold AND wet weather, presents additional challenges similar to just being cold, but requires Riders possess a high-quality rain suit, as well as waterproof gloves, and possibly boot covers, to keep them dry, as well as warm. You can't properly operate a motorcycle when you are numb, and your mind is not fully focused on the potential dangers of riding in such weather.

-Rider's need to always keep in mind that, if they are thinking more about the rain hitting their face, or how hot or cold they are, rather than their riding awareness, they are an accident waiting to happen.

STATEGIES FOR STREET RIDING

Traffic situation are constantly changing on the street, and sometimes quickly and without warning. Being in FULL CONTROL of the motorcycle is paramount to the rider, and all other traffic around it. The Rider must be fully aware of his/her time and space requirements. The key to safe, enjoyable and responsible riding is "Proper Preparation." This includes mental and physical condition of the rider, the significance of wearing proper riding apparel and gear,

and the need for proper care and maintenance of the motorcycle being ridden. Additional risk management should include, but not be limited to:

-Lane Choice: Positioning yourself to be able to see well down the road and to be visible to others. Maintaining as much space cushion as traffic and roadway conditions will allow for your margin of safety.

-Lane Positions: Positioning yourself properly within a lane to avoid windblast from other vehicles, help you see and avoid roadway hazards, and help create and maintain a space cushion between yourself and other vehicles. Don't "hide" among other vehicles

-Being Visible: **"See and Be Seen."** As stated in other sections of this document, become more visible to others through your clothing, headlight, and proper use of your signals, brakes lights, and horn.

-Rider Radar: Your personal "RADAR" helps you perceive the hazards ahead, which account for around three-fourths (3/4) of ALL the hazards that affect you. Remember your initial motorcycle rider training, and the "Three Lead Times" that you can use:

-The 2-Second Following Distance: The first lead-time is the 2-second following distance. It is considered to be a minimum distance when conditions are ideal. Less than perfect riding conditions, such as reduced traction or visibility, rider fatigue, etc., require increasing available time and space. The way to establish 2-second following distance, is as follows:

-Pick out a fixed point ahead, like a post or pavement making. As the vehicle ahead of you passes the fixed object, count-off *"One-Motorcycle-One, Two-Motorcycle-Two";* if the fixed point has not been reached, your following distance is at least 2 seconds, but also remember the "3 Components of Total Stopping Distance":

-Perception distance: The distance traveled from the time something is present until you see it.

-Reaction distance: The distance traveled from the time you see a hazard to when you actually apply the brakes

-Braking distance: The distance traveled from the time the brakes are applied until actually stopped.

NOTE: **The more time and attention you devote to perception distance, the greater your margin of safety will be! Consider using a 3-, or maybe even a 4-second following distance for a great margin of safety, when less than ideal riding conditions exist.**

-The 4-Second Immediate Path: The second lead-time is the 4-second immediate path. Anything that is within 4 seconds of your path is now considered immediate because a quick response is required if something should go wrong. Four seconds provides time and space to swerve and/or brake for fixed hazards or for someone or something entering your path.

-The 12-Second Anticipated Path: Proper searching technique requires that you can scan 12 seconds ahead. This means to look ahead to an area it would take that long to reach. It provides time to prepare for a situation before it becomes immediate.

-Mental Processing: MSF explains mental processing as *"Safe riding is more of a skill of the eyes and mind than of the hands and feet."* You probably use some kind of mental strategy to deal with traffic. Some of the processes have been formalized, and all of them form a decision-making approach to increase safety. One good strategy to use is "**SEE**," which is an acronym that represents **S**earch, **E**valuate, and **E**xecute. It is a process that can help you reduce risk in traffic, as follows:

-**S**EARCH: To search means to scan aggressively for potential factors and hazards. Searching provides you with information to make decisions. Searching means more than just what is in front of you. It also includes the areas behind and to the sides. Check the mirrors often and use head checks to notice what might be in a blind spot (that area to the side and behind that mirrors do not show). Remember that many motorcycles have convex mirrors that allow the rider to see farther to the sides, BUT they can also distort depth perception (how far away the object is). The eyes should NOT fixate on any one object for more than a split second! It is important to prioritize all the important elements in the traffic environment. Riders should SEARCH in three (3) categories:

1) Road and surface characteristics;
2) Traffic control markings and devices;
3) Other highway users.

They ALL blend together into what is important at any given moment.

-**E**VALUATE: To evaluate means to anticipate problems. It means to constantly try to figure out how factors can accumulate and interact to form a hazard or conflict, which if not dealt with, could lead to a crash. It means to predict the worst, to get the best results. It means to separate hazards before they develop into a potentially dangerous situation. Consider playing a "What if . . .?" game; it can be fun and energizing. Traffic is such a puzzle at times because other highway users are often unpredictable. It is important in good risk management to figure out time and space requirements so a safety margin can be maintained.

Three (3) factors will affect your safety margin:

1) Your personal capabilities and limitations;
2) The capabilities and limitations of your motorcycle;
3) Roadway/traffic conditions.

EXAMPLES: The safety margin will be gone if a required maneuver call for skill beyond your personal skill level; or if a situation requires more steering and/or braking than your motorcycle is capable of providing; or if there is not time and space available to maneuver.

-**E**XECUTE: Safe riding requires a "*superior mental strategy to avoid the need for superior maneuvering skills."* Good riders consciously reduce crash-producing factors they contribute into the traffic mix, but they possess well-developed maneuvering skills as well. Three (3) "action steps" make up the Execute phase. They are:

1) Adjust your speed
2) Adjust your position
3) Communicate your intentions.

-Common Riding Situations:

-Be Alert at Intersections. Always check for traffic behind, oncoming traffic, and traffic to both your left and right sides.

-Be aware of traffic between intersections. Give yourself a cushion, maintain safe speeds, watch for vehicles pulling out from parking, be alert for pedestrians. And avoid vehicle blind spots.

-Stay out of the "NO-ZONE" in-and-around large trucks.

-Don't try to confront a tailgater. Left them go around you, even if that means pulling off. Remember, they will most likely bigger than you.

-Watch yourself going over hills and into curves, and especially blind curves and blind hills. Just because a speed sign says you can go a certain speed, doesn't mean it's safe to do so. If you can't see what is around the curve, or over the hill, you may be going too fast. Many motorcycles crash on curves and hills are due to excessive speed, and/or

unseen objects, animals, and/or other road conditions.
-Learn how to park your bike safely, on all on-road, and off-road conditions. Practice reentering traffic safely from parking spaces.
-Carefully consider and evaluate your options when passing vehicles, and making lane changes. If it's not really safe to do, don't do it!
-Group Riding is both fun, but also extremely dangerous, especially for new riders, but also for seasoned riders who think they are better riders than everyone else. Often times, it's the latter group who causes more safety issues. Refer to the separate section regarding Group Riding.

-<u>Maximum Braking and Swerving</u>:

The majority of motorcycles, and especially models made in the last four decades-or-so, have a front brake, and a rear brake. The front brake being operated by means of a hand-lever, and the rear brake with a foot pedal. You must be familiar with your make, model, and year, by reading your owner's manual to determine what you have. Are you equipped with "Integrated Brakes," or "Linked Brakes," or Anti-Lock Brakes?"

Once you determine what you have, you must practice braking by considering what is involved in:

-Straight-Line braking
-Braking in Curves
-Front-Tire Skidding
-Rear-Tire Skidding
-Swerving

Lack of practice and ability in any one of the above, can lead to having a serious accident.

-<u>Special Situations</u>:

"Special Situations" are those that commonly happen, but the majority of riders never consider, or think about them. They also don't usually prepare themselves for the "What if this happens/What do I do? question, if they were to encounter one or more situations, such as:

-Rain-slick surfaces
-Worn pavement
-Bridge grates
-Loose surfaces and debris
-Crack sealant and Tar Strips ("Tar Snakes")

-Construction plates
-Ice/Snow patches, Mud, Moss or Algae
-Crowned Roads
-Rain Grooves
-Bumps, Cracks and Heavy Vehicle Tire tracks/Ruts
-Animals
-Tire or mechanical failure
-Wobble/Weave: If you remain calm, you can usually slow down and "Ride-it-out," but if you panic and hit the brakes, or try to make quick turns, or both, you will most likely crash!

-Passengers and Cargo:

Carrying a passenger can affect the way you handle your motorcycle. The weight makes starting out more difficult, and reduces acceleration. More time and space will be required for passing. It may also increase stopping distance. Stability may be affected in turns and curves. Read more in the Passenger and Cargo section below.

-Impairments:

Riding a motorcycle requires a great amount of MENTAL ALERTNESS and PHYSICAL SKILL. Drugs, alcohol, fatigue, stress, fatigue/drowsiness, emotions, and other factors greatly reduce your ability to operate safely. Alcohol is a MAJOR contributor to motorcycle crashes, in that almost 50% of all riders killed had been drinking prior to riding. One-Third of those had a blood alcohol content (BAC) above the legal limit. The remaining two-thirds had just enough alcohol in them to impair their mental and physical ability to ride safely.

Another common impairment comes as the result of "aggressive riding," or the "90-miles-an-hour-with-your-hair-on-fire" attitude. This style of riding too often leads to poor judgment, increased risk, serious injuries, and even death. This type of riding should be saved for the motorcycle race tracks and closed-circuit riding areas.

-INTERVENTION:

As Veterans, we all understand the term "BATTLE BUDDY." When we served, it meant everything from making sure your buddies stayed away from the wrong part of town, the wrong "townies," and making it home without getting picked up by M.P.'s, to "never leaving a man behind!"

Times may have changed, but being a Battle Buddy hasn't, to include

intervention when someone has had “too much of a good time.” When someone has had “too much,” it’s the responsibility of others to help that person. No one likes being in a situation that requires intervention, but the end result is what’s important.

When an intervention becomes necessary:

-Enlist others to help. Don’t try to handle an impaired person on your own. They may become violent, suffer a medical incident, or cause you physical injury while trying to handle them.

-Arrange a safe ride. Provide alternate ways to get them home.

-Slow the pace of activity and direct their attention elsewhere.

-Delay departure of the group. Eat, and consume lots of water.

-Keep the bike parked!!!!

HEALTH and FITNESS

Riding a motorcycle, regardless of whether it’s on two-wheels or three-wheels, is much more tiring than driving a car, and requires riders be in good mental and physical health. Riders will get tired much faster riding a motorcycle, which results in fatigue, and ultimately loss of adequate control of the cycle.

All Riders should be in the physical shape possible before ever getting on a motorcycle. Proper exercise, diet, and abstinence of alcohol and drugs while riding is of paramount importance. The Virginia Motorcycle Operator Manual, from the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), suggests some things to help keep riders from getting too tired:

-Protect yourself from the elements: Wind, cold, and rain (and heat) make you tire quickly. Dress for the conditions.

-A windshield is worth it’s cost if you plan to do a lot of long-distance riding.

-Limit your distance. Experienced riders seldom ride more than about six hours a day. If you have an accident, or drive erratically in Virginia due to fatigue, you will most likely be cited for Reckless Driving, which carries a stiff penalty.

-Take frequent rest breaks. Drink water – stay hydrated. Stop and get off the cycle.

PASSENGERS and CARGO

Riding with passengers is yet another higher skill level above being a basic “one-on” rider. Riders should avoid carrying any passengers, or any “large loads,” until they have gained a lot of on-the-road riding experience.

The extra weight added by a passenger and/or cargo changes the dynamics of how a motorcycle handles, balances, turns, speeds up and slows down. Before any rider takes on any passenger and/or any cargo out on the street, they should practice with that passenger and/or cargo in a safe, off-road practice area. Riders needing experience are encourage to start out by adding weight to their bike gradually, and practicing with each weight change. Once they are comfortable with having extra weight in their saddle bags, top box, etc., they can move up to adding a passenger. The Rider must always keep in mind that, with each new weight change, their riding dynamic changes.

These guidelines are especially important for first-time Riders participating on Chapter group rides, Department & National Legacy Rides, or other long-distance rides.

The Virginia Motorcycle Operators Handbook, from the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), recommends the following:

-Passengers:

To carry passengers safely you must:

-Make sure your motorcycle is equipped and adjusted to carry passengers.
-Instruct your passenger before you start.
-Adjust your riding technique for the added weight of the passenger.

-Equipment:

To carry passengers, you must have:

-A proper Seat: The seat should be large enough to hold both you and your passenger without crowding. You should not sit any further forward than you usually do.
-Footpegs: The passenger must have his/her own set of footpegs. Without a firm footing, your passenger can fall off and pull you off, too.
-Protective equipment: Passengers should have the same type protective equipment and clothing recommended for operators.

-Adjust the cycle:

You should also adjust the cycle to handle the extra weight. While your

passenger sits on the seat with you, adjust the mirror and headlight to the change in the motorcycle's angle. It is also a good idea to add a few pounds of pressure to the tires if you carry a passenger (Check your owner's manual). Adjust the suspension to handle the additional weight.

-Instructing Passengers:

-Don't assume the passenger knows what to do – even if he or she is a regular motorcycle rider. Provide complete instructions before you start. To prepare your passenger for riding, tell him or her to:
-Get on the motorcycle after you have started the engine.
-Sit as far forward as possible without crowding you.
-Hold firmly to your waist, hips, or belt (Handgrips if available)
-Keep both feet on the pegs at all times, even when the motorcycle is stopped.
-Keep their legs away from the muffler (Another reason for long pants!!)
-Stay directly behind you, leaning as you lean.
-Avoid any unnecessary talk or motion.

-ADDITIONAL NOTE:

Always be sure to tell your passenger (if possible) to tighten his or her hold when you:

-Approach surface problems
-Are about to start from a stop
-Warn (if possible) that you are going to make a sudden move.

-Riding with Passengers:

Your motorcycle will respond slower with a passenger onboard. The heavier your passenger, the longer it will take to slow down, speed up, or make a turn. Here's what you should do adjust for the difference in handling:

-Go a little slower, especially when taking curves, corners, or bumps.
-Start slowing earlier as you approach a stop.
-Open up a larger cushion of space ahead and to the sides.
-Wait for larger gaps when you want to cross, enter, or merge with traffic.

Warn your passenger of what's ahead:

Remember, you should try to warm your passenger of special conditions ahead – when you pull out, stop quickly, turn sharply, or ride over a bump. Otherwise, talk as little as possible. When you must talk, turn your head slightly to make yourself understood but, be sure you don't turn your head too far. Never take

your eyes off the road**. (If you must talk, such as to communicate with Lead and Tail Riders on a group ride, the use of helmet-integrated communications systems are highly encouraged.)**

-Carrying Loads:

Most motorcycles are NOT really equipped to carry much cargo. However, small loads can be carried safely if they are positioned and fastened properly;

-Keep the load low: Fasten loads to the seat (bars), or put them in saddle bags. Do not pile large loads against a sissy bar or frame on the back of the seat. Placing a load high against a bar or frame raises the cycle's center of gravity and disturbs its balance.

-Keep the load forward: Place the load over or in front of the rear axle. Tank bags are one way to keep loads forward, however, use caution when loading hard or sharp objects. Mounting loads behind the rear axle can affect how the motorcycle turns and brakes. It can also cause a wobble.

-Distribute the load evenly: If you have saddle bags, make sure each is loaded with about the same weight. An uneven load can cause the motorcycle to drift to one side.

-Secure the load: Stop and check the load every so often. Make sure it has not worked loose or moved. If you ride with others, you must do it in a way that doesn't endanger anyone or interfere with the flow of traffic.

GROUP RIDING

Riding as a group presents all sorts of safety issues, obstacles, and protentional legal issues depending on the size of the group, the style of riding, the behavior of the riders, and the jurisdiction being ridden through. Speed, and other high-risk traffic violation issues, along with bad rider behavior, can contribute to bad feeling among other riders, the general public, and law enforcement. All Riders must be aware of what is, and is not, legal and/or allowed when representing the American Legion Rider, such as:

Road Guards: Almost every Rider and Chapter has at one time or another used what we commonly refer to as "Road Guards." They should be aware of each states law as they pertain to their usage. For example, using road guards is Illegal in Virginia. According to *Virginia Code 46.2-818: "No person shall willfully:*

1. *Stop the vehicle of another for the sole purpose of impeding its progress on the highways except in the case of an emergency or mechanical breakdown. Any person violating any provision of this section is guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor, and in addition, his driver's license may be suspended by the court for a period of not more than one year."*

The bottom line here is, using "Road Guards" to block/stop traffic should be avoided unless absolutely necessary, and then judiciously, and with discretion and common sense, erring on the side of safety for all riders.

Traffic Signals: Other overlooked laws to consider, such as running yellow lights, regardless of whether alone or in a group, is also illegal. According to *Virginia Code 46.2-833: Traffic Lights:*

A. *Signals by traffic lights shall be as follows: Steady amber indicates that a change is about to be made in the direction of the moving traffic. When the amber signal is shown, traffic which has not already entered the intersection, including the crosswalks, shall stop if it is not reasonably safe to continue, but traffic which has already entered the intersection shall continue to move until the intersection has been cleared. Violation of any provision of this section shall constitute a traffic infraction punishable by a fine of no more than $350.*

The bottom line here is, if you establish a proper group riding style - which does not promote the entire group *"staying together at all costs,"* (a bad biker mentality), and allows riders to stop when required - you should do well. Keep in mind that if you ride into the intersection and the light changes from yellow to red, you expose yourself, and other riders, to "green-light-jumpers," which can result in serious bodily injury and/or death. (and you will be at fault).

The above are but two examples of recurring issues with motorcycle riders, along with many other issues such as spacing and timing, drinking, drugs, road rage, etc. Exceptions may be made to some laws when on a law enforcement escorted group ride, when, and only if, directed to do so by a law enforcement officer.

Breaking-up large groups into smaller groups is, and always has been, the recommended method for controlling group riding. The *Virginia Motorcycle Operator Manual*, from the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles (VDOT) states: *"If you ride with others, you must do it in a way that doesn't endanger anyone or interfere with the flow of traffic."* It recommends: "Keep the Group Small," and suggests: *"If your group is larger than four or five riders, divide it into two or more smaller groups."* Riders should also keep their distance, not pair-up, ride in a staggered formation, and only pass when safe to do so.

The "2nd Man" or "Drop System" of riding has been in use in Europe for many years with great results, and has been adopted by many riding groups in the U.S., to include local Legion Riders Chapters, as it promotes safety, controls group size, prevents traffic violations, and

ensures that everyone reaches the final destination in one piece. It has been repeatedly tested within the Department by the ALR, over thousands of miles and hundreds of hours without incident, and found to be a very safe and effective way to travel with a group of Riders.

Remember, the goal in group riding should be to get the entire group from POINT A to POINT B in the safest and most legal way possible. It is a myth, and foolish to assume, that law enforcement will not stop a group ride after observing violations of the law. It is happening all across the country, and bad riders are giving good riders a bad name. There is no destination so important that its worth dying for out on the highway.

CARE and MAINTENANCE

Back in the "old west days," at the end of a long day's ride, cowboys always took care of their horses before they themselves ate, or rested. They knew that if they did not properly brush, clean hooves, feed and water their horse, it could result in tragic consequences for them out on the trail the next day. When it comes to riding todays "Iron Horses," times really haven't changed much, except a motorcycle needs more frequent attention than a car. Gas, oil, tires, lighting, etc. are essential, and Riders must all learn, and abide by, the proper rules for the "Care and Feeding" of their Iron Horse.

A minor mechanical failure in a car usually results in inconvenience for the driver, whereas, if some goes wrong with your motorcycle it may cause a crash, resulting in serious bodily harm, or death.

The only way to head off problems before they cause problems for a rider, is for a rider to inspect their motorcycle carefully, and often. If a rider discovers there is something wrong with their biker, they must fix it immediately. Again, areas to consider on every check includes, but is not limited to:

-tires,
-wheels,
-cables,
-oil,
-drive train,
-fasteners,
-brakes, lights,
-hydraulic systems,
-coolant,
-and any after-market items added/attached to the bike.

RIDER SKILLS TESTING and TRAINING

Every American Legion Riders Chapter should strive to establish an “in-house” Rider Training Program. At a minimum, this training should cover the following:

Chapter Level:

-The Chapter Riders Director and Chapter Safety officer should conduct a “New Rider Skills Assessment,” which may include, but not be limited to:

-Vehicle TCLOCS and Safety Inspection
-Proper clothing and Equipment Check
-Starting/Stopping
-Cone riding (Serpentine riding, etc.)
-Obstacle avoidance
-Group Riding skills
-Inclement Weather Skills
-Slow speed Turning
-Chapter Meeting Safety Briefings
-Skills refresher sessions

Department Level:

Whenever, and wherever possible, American Legion Riders, both individually and as Chapters, should avail themselves of any and all motorcycle skills testing and/or training provided to them by the Department, and be willing to pass the knowledge gained to other Riders within their Chapter.

The Department Safety Officer will provide guidance, recommendations, and training if required, which may include, but not be limited to:

-Legion College Safety Presentations
-Chapter Safety Presentations
-Seasonal Safety Bulletins
-Chapter evaluations and/or training
-Any other skills testing and training made available to the department.

Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV):

Whenever, and wherever possible, American Legion Riders, both individually and as Chapters, should avail themselves of any and all motorcycle skills testing and/or training provided to them by their state Department of Motor Vehicles, and be willing to pass the knowledge gained to other Riders within their Chapter.

Law Enforcement:

Whenever, and wherever possible, American Legion Riders, both individually and as Chapters, should avail themselves of any and all motorcycle skills testing and/or training provided to them by their state Department of Motor Vehicles, and be willing to pass the knowledge gained to other Riders within their Chapter.

Military:

Whenever, and wherever possible, American Legion Riders, both individually and as Chapters, should avail themselves of any and all military installation skills testing and/or training provided to them by military installations, and be willing to pass the knowledge gained to other Riders within their Chapter.

Private Instruction:

Whenever, and wherever possible American Legion Riders, both individually and as Chapters, should avail themselves of any and all certified private motorcycle skills testing and/or training facilities available to them, and be willing to pass the knowledge gained to other Riders within their Chapter. **Etc. Etc. Etc.**

Safety and Training NEVER stops.

It is up to each Chapter, and each Rider within the Chapters, to PRACTICE and PROMOTE Motorcycle Riding Safety and continual Training.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

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American Legion Riders

Apex Cycle Education

BMW US Rider Academy

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DoD Rider Training

Harley-Davidson Riding Academy

Honda Rider Education Center

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Richmond Ambulance Service, Richmond, Virginia

Ride Like A Pro, Inc.

Rider Alert Motorcycle-Safety Program

Virginia Department of Motor Vehicle (DMV): Virginia Motorcycle Operator Manual

Virginia State Police – Motorcycle Safety

U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards nhtsa.gov

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