



The Slow Rider in a Group

After returning from Women in the Wind MC Winter Nationals, I am renewed with some ideas for Safety articles. One of the topics that came up was what to do with a slow rider in a group. Several women had concerns about this issue. With more and more women getting into motorcycling and WITW recruiting new members, this can be a continual problem. Chapters will have many different levels of riders within their group. I've even spoken to some members that have told me that they have women in their chapters still on their permit.

As most of you know I am a motorcycle safety instructor and I can tell you from experience that usually the older the student, the slower the learning process. Not that they can't learn, but they are a lot more cautious during the learning process. They know that it hurts to fall down. Older women seem to have an additional problem, they lack confidence. These two factors make for a slow and cautious rider. Usually as confidence builds, so does speed. But it takes time and about 3000 miles of riding.

I have a few suggestions for the slow rider. First, make sure you have a bike that you are comfortable with. A bike that scares you is no good for you, but especially in the beginning. Then in the beginning of the riding season, take a Beginner's Riding Course, even if you have taken it before. This will do a couple of things. If you are doing anything incorrectly, you can straighten it out. You will get more practice turning, braking, cornering and swerving. And since you already know how to ride you will be the star pupil and that will build your confidence. My next suggestion is to park your car somewhere and only ride your bike. Ride it everywhere. Ride it to work. Get some good size saddlebags so you can grocery shop. You'll have to go more often but it can be done. Ride it in all kinds of weather. Make sure you have the right kind of riding gear. Do this for the whole riding season. Pretend you don't have a car. If you can, take a road trip. At the end of the riding season, go back and take an Experienced Rider's Course.

Motorcycling is an expensive hobby/lifestyle. You have to have a good running bike with great tires. You need proper gear. You need storage on you bike to carry a rainsuit, tools and other essentials. If one of our kids wanted to take up skiing or some other sport, we would come up with the money to get them the gear they need. We tend to short cut on ourselves, and you really can't if you are serious about riding.

Now for those of you riding with the slow riders. It is not safe to push someone beyond their limits. But in group riding a slow rider can be a serious hazard. Most times they will tell you to go ahead, and they will catch up with you. You can have one rider stay with the slow rider or you can have one rider leave earlier with the slow rider. Let them take an easier route if possible. Have them take the Interstate, while you take the back roads with all the curves. The slow rider will eventually get their speed up if they are out there practicing. If they aren't out there practicing, then maybe they really aren't serious about riding. When someone is really scared to ride they have to decide if they really want to do this or not. They have to decide for themselves because it takes some really hard work to become a good rider. And you must be a good rider to survive out there.



The MSF puts out a video called **The MSF Guide to Group Riding** if any groups want to show it at a meeting. It's a decent video and it is also a good starting point to have some discussions about group riding. Please don't think I am picking on women riders in this article, I was 38 when I started riding and I was the world's worst. Right after I got my license I took a cross-country trip that I never went over 45MPH. It took me 3 weeks to get to the West Coast.

Keep in mind that when you get one rider up to speed in your group, someone else will join that needs your help. And in my mind that is the way you can give something back to the sport, helping the newbies get on the road.

Ride Safe!