

## **ELASTICITY.....YOUR PROBLEM TO CONTROL**

Webster defines **ELASTICITY** as "the capability of a strained body to recover its size and shape after deformation"....sound familiar? Should be....that's us on every group ride we take.

Yes, it's a problem to one degree or another on every group ride. The more bikes in the group the bigger the problem and the bigger the problem the more chance of an accident happening within the group.....but... **ELASTICITY** is manageable and the risks of an accident can be minimized if we ride **IN** the group **FOR** the group and accept a degree of responsibility (read safety) for the bike immediately ahead of and behind us.

As you read this, think of yourself as riding in any of the possible three positions within the group. (1)Leader, (2)in the group, or (3)tail gunner. How best should you ride in this position? Before you think about it, perhaps you should first ask yourself if you even **WANT** to or **SHOULD** or **ENJOY** riding in close formation within a group. If you have any apprehension, fear, or concern about your riding skills on any group ride then by all means, for your own safety and that of your fellow riders, please don't participate. The smart thing to do is to go to the group leader and tell him of your decision, check on the destination and ride your own ride at a comfortable speed and distance well behind the group to the destination.

Some things to think about and consider in any group ride:

You will **ALWAYS** have some degree of elasticity in any group ride. It can only be minimized by your quick reaction, response and attention to detail. Your delay in starting to move, poor judgment in selecting the proper riding interval and responding quickly to changes in speed and interval distance all add up to your personal contribution to elasticity. Elasticity is time and speed variations within the group with each rider and is multiplied and corrected by the number of riders.

It is well known that the closer you are to an object the more likely (quicker) you are to discern or pick-up on any change in that distance. (One reason military pilots fly in close formation). That's why it is easier to stay in and constantly monitor your correct riding position than it is to drift in and out from lack of attention.

Rapid acceleration by the leader **ALWAYS** results in huge gaps and elasticity within the group. He may only accelerate to 60 MPH but

because of his rapid RATE of acceleration the poor tail gunner and those in the back of the group may have to do 75 MPH just to catch up. Good leaders know this and always use a slow rate of acceleration WHICH HE CAN VARY according to conditions. Also a good leader must always try to lead at a constant speed again variable according to conditions. (traffic changes, weather, group problems)

If there is a break in the group and a 4 wheeler slips in ahead of (or behind) you by all means, just let him go. NEVER NEVER “argue” with him.....it’s called YOU LOSE (maybe big time). The leader will know of the problem and will slow the group down. The 4 wheeler will get tired of his game and pass the group and all will be back to normal. Be patient.

Also keep radio transmissions brief and to a minimum. Close interval high speed riding requires all of your attention and distractions can be dangerous. We need the group frequency to be free and accessible by the leader and the tail gunner for directions, and corrections. Some idle chatter is OK but please make sure the frequency is clear before transmitting. No one hears anything when simultaneous transmissions occur.

You must ride in your own lane (this includes the leader who should be riding in the left lane) at all times. Pay attention to your lane position when making group turns particularly in traffic and at intersections. Some of our riders are drifting right/left during a turn and cutting the rider behind them off causing the rider who is cut off to back down to allow space. This dangerous practice in turn adds to elasticity and spacing problems.

The tail gunner is like a sheep dog is to the flock. He is your “back door” protection, safety observer and road manager. He reports to and converses freely with the leader regarding lane changes and other group maneuvers. The tail gunner has a terrific view of the group and may ask for corrections in spacing from individual riders within the group. Please do not take offense to tail gunner corrections.....they happen infrequently and are intended for group continuity and safety.

Group riding requires your full attention. Stay in your lane, keep about two or three seconds behind the rider in front of you (in your lane), keep your distance closed and steady and always be aware of the riders immediately around you and their safety. You may be suddenly called upon to provide yourself and others with an “escape route” in an emergency.

If you and others are caught at an intersection by a yellow light, just STOP! The tail gunner will notify the leader and he will make

**arrangements for the group to get back together. Please don't push through the intersection. Remember that there is no protection in Florida for group riders. Everyone is treated as a solo rider. It's dangerous and not worth the risk.**

**Why this limited article on Elasticity and group riding? Because some in our group need to be reminded from time to time about the basics. Also some of us are getting a little sloppy providing an open invitation to 4 wheelers to become part of our group.**

**Thanks for listening! Have fun, ride safe and stay in position.**

**Jim & Jennie Heiser, Rider Educators**