

*Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association*



*Virginia*

**GROUP RIDING**  
**STANDING OPERATING**  
**PROCEDURES (SOP)**

Revised: 11 Feb 2023

## 1. Introduction

1.1. This SOP is provided in order to ensure all CVMA 27-1 members are informed and are aware of expectations during our rides and to minimize ride brief requirements. 1.2. During all group rides, CVMA 27-1 riders will be in the front of the formation, followed by Non-chapter CVMA members and finally invited guests to the rear. Trikes, bikes with sidecars and the Tail Gunner will be last in the line of riders behind the non-chapter CVMA members and invited guests.

1.3. This document does not cover all situations. During times of unbriefed or unusual circumstances, it is the responsibility of each rider to ride with common sense and the skills you have learned through your training and experience

1.4. This SOP has been reviewed by the Executive Officer, Safety Officer and Road Captains, and approved by the Commander

1.5. An electronic copy will be available for reading and/or downloading on the Chapter Google group page.

1.6. Every member is expected to read and be familiar with this SOP and to ensure their guests are aware of expected conduct during rides

1.7. This SOP will be reviewed periodically by the Chapter Safety Officer and will be updated as required with the approval of the Commander, who will have gained concurrence of appropriate chapter members.

### Arrive prepared. .

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

**INSPECT YOUR MOTORCYCLE** – All riders are responsible for making sure their motorcycles are mechanically up to the task. Before you even meet up with the group, make sure you've got plenty of fuel in the tank, and that you've taken care of all those maintenance issues. Not sure what to check? Use T-CLOCS, which stands for Tires, Controls, Lights, Oil, Chassis and Kickstand. See the T-CLOCS chart (Appendix C). Safety Officer can provide copies as required.

2. **Pre-ride brief.** We will discuss things like safety, the route, rest and fuel stops, and hand signals (see diagrams on next page), and assignment of

a lead and tail gunner, if not already assigned. Both should be experienced riders who are well-versed in group riding procedures. The leader should assess everyone's riding skills and place them in the formation appropriately. Ride may include a DOD Installation. If this is the case, please review the requirements for DOD Installation Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), (Appendix B)

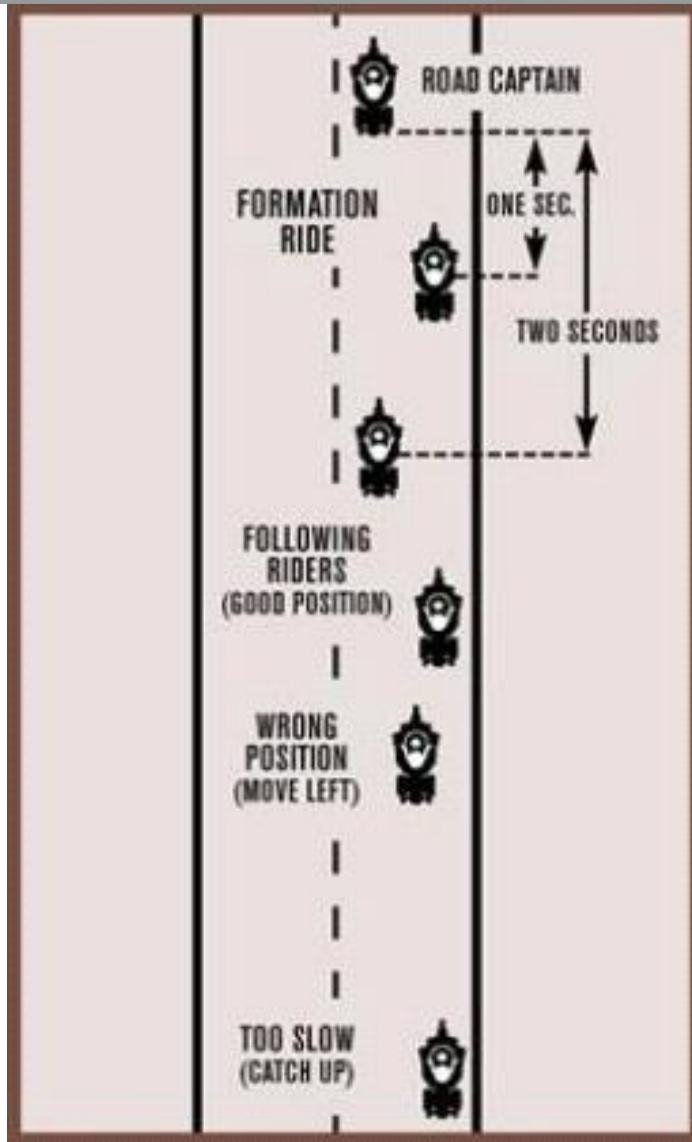
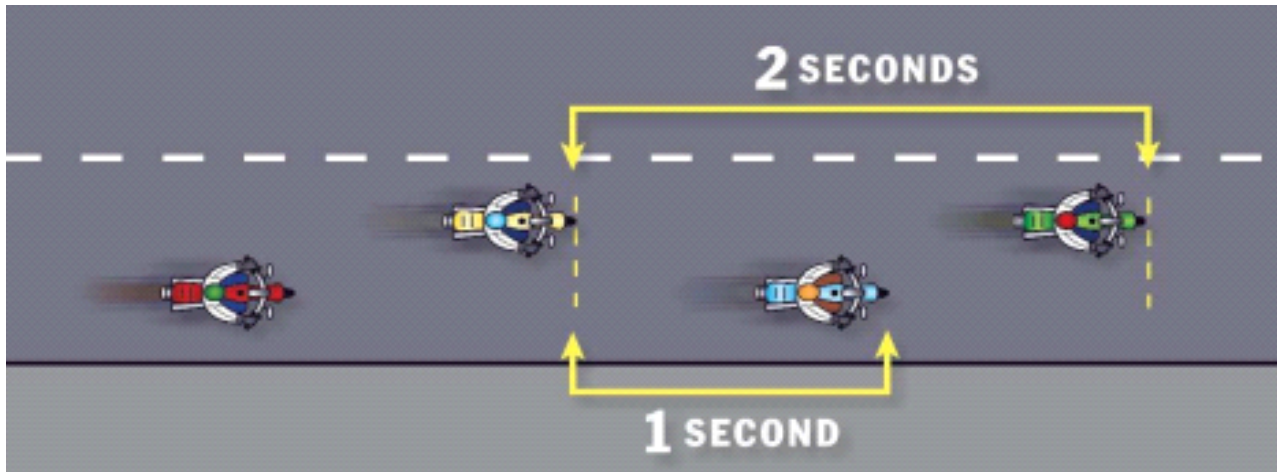
3. **Ride prepared.** At least one rider in each group should pack a cell phone, first-aid kit, and full tool kit, so the group is prepared for any problem that they might encounter. This is required gear for the Tail Gunner.

4. **Ride in formation.** The staggered riding formation (see diagram below) allows a proper space cushion between motorcycles so that each rider has enough time and space to maneuver and to react to hazards. A single-file formation may be required on a curvy road, under conditions of restricted visibility, poor road surfaces, or other situations where maneuvering room is restricted. Under normal conditions, same side spacing should be a maximum of 2 seconds.

5. **Keeping formation** – Nothing is quite as irritating as seeing undisciplined riding, especially when riding with the CVMA insignia. If for some reason a member repositions in the formation, it is incumbent upon all other riders to adjust. There is only one way of doing this that is acceptable in this Chapter to maintain the staggered formation:

5.1. **Pull Forward (chapter required method)** – All members of one side of the formation pull forward to fill any gaps. This enables all members to maintain maximum of 2- second spacing while repositioning. *No criss-crossing is authorized as it is too dangerous.* During the ride brief, the Ride Captain will ensure the **Pull Forward** method is included, along with other safety items briefed. The Tail Gunner is charged with safety and maintaining group integrity compliance while on the roll.

**UNDER NO CONDITION SHOULD A FORMATION CHANGE OCCUR WITHOUT THE POSITIVE INDICATION AND / OR ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE RIDERS CHANGING FORMATION (i.e. DO NOT MOVE FORWARD PAST ANOTHER RIDER UNTIL INDICATED OR ACKNOWLEDGED TO DO SO).**



6. Scan- Riders should develop a scan pattern that allows them to

determine any abnormality in a timely manner. Scan should include:

6.1. **Where you're going** – The vast majority of your attention should be focused towards the front in order to react in a timely manner to any situations that may arise and, of course, to stay on the road.

6.2. **Periodically check the riders following in your rear view mirror.** If you see a rider falling behind, slow down so they may catch up.

6.3. **Engine instruments and lights** - Check to see if your turn signals are on, any caution lights you may have are on, fuel state, speed and any other gauge you may have. A proper scan of these should take no more than 1 second, maybe 2. You should scan these on a regular basis.

## 7. Key positions:

7.1. **Road Captain (RC)** – Sets the pace, determines stops and is responsible for overall safety of the ride. Order of Riders: RC, Chapter Commander or XO, National/State officers (if present), Chapter officers, Full members, Supporter members, Auxiliary members, non-members followed by bikes with side cars and/or trikes and the Tail Gunner (TG).

7.2. **Bike Two** – Sets the formation spacing. Responsible for blocking traffic if required. Example: If merging into heavy traffic will assume the new lane and slow to allow all other riders to merge. Will then assume position directly in front of Tail Gunner. Bike Two position will be filled by **Bike Four**.

7.3. **Blockers/Road Guards for information only 27-1 does not use blocker/road guards. Other groups may** – If the situation dictates, the second (and third if required) rider in the formation will stage his motorcycle to block traffic in order to allow all members of the group to complete a maneuver (leaving parking lot, making turns...). This should only be done if briefed, or clearly understood by hand signals.

7.4. **Trikes and Sidecars** – Trikes and bikes with sidecars will travel in staggered formation after the last motorcycle and before the Tail Gunner.

7.5. **Tail Gunner (TG) (also known as “Sweeper”)** – Responsible for the safe conduct of maneuvers during the ride. Sets spacing if required (loosening up or “pushing” forward). Is primary member to stop with any rider who has a problem, unless another rider has been designated. Clears and begins lane changes. If the designated Tail Gunner stops to render assistance, the last rider will assume Tail Gunner duties. At the discretion of the Road Captain, a trike rider may be assigned as Tail Gunner.

8. **Lane changes** . -Normally, lane changes will be signaled from the front and will be completed from back to front (load from the rear), unless the

situation dictates otherwise. After the Ride Captain or lead rider signals for lane change, the Tail Gunner will ensure a clear lane at his ride position when signaled, then move into the new lane in order to block rolling upcoming traffic, and allow all other members to move to the new lane when clear and safe to do so.

**9. Use Hand and Foot Signals** –The Ride Captain will use hand or foot signals (Appendix A) to indicate a change of course, hazards, or other information to the group, unless safety dictates otherwise. Each rider uses the same signal to pass the information back through the group. If you are new to group riding, only pass the signals back if you are comfortable with taking your hands off the controls. See MSF Hand Signals used by the Chapter contained within this SOP.

**10. Fuel stops** – Fill one, fill all. If we all follow first guideline, we will all have similar amount of fuel. Unless you have a 10 gallon or more gas tank, fill-er-up with the rest.

**11. Keep the group together without extraordinary steps** – Occasionally the group will get separated by a stop light, traffic congestion, etc. It is neither necessary nor advisable to take exceptional steps to regroup. In the event the group is separated, the Lead Motorcycle will adjust the ride (either by slowing down or stopping at a safe location) until the ride is regrouped. In some circumstances, this may take several miles. BE PATIENT! If you find yourself leading part of the group due to a break and you are not sure of the route, pull over to a safe place. ***(Important: Neither the center lane, median strip nor a soft shoulder are acceptable or safe places to stop. Find a hard surface that will fit the number of bikes pulling off and pull off there.)*** Everyone behind you and the Tail Gunner will stop so that you can let the Tail Gunner assume the Road Captain spot.

**12. Keep the group together with extraordinary steps** – Using Blockers: assist in getting the group or entire formation through intersections safely, quickly, and efficiently. While technically illegal, blocking also eases the effect of the passage on traffic in general. It also helps to avert any rider or riders from making a risky choice rather than chance being separated from the rest. Blockers, when directed to a position by the Lead Motorcycle, should activate their flashers just prior to pulling out of formation. The flashers should be shut off after rejoining just ahead of the Tail Gunner. While blocking, it is wise to remain in gear and ready to move should another vehicle ignore the request to wait. A "stop" hand signal is suggested while blocking and is most easily accomplished by the passenger if present. A "thank you" signal by blockers and Tail Gunner as well is a nice touch and is usually appreciated. Since a blocker assumes the responsibility of holding up traffic, plus a remote possibility of a traffic violation, it is of course voluntary. Should you have no desire to block,

position yourself toward the rear of the pack. In the event that you later anticipate being called upon, signal rearward riders ahead of you at an appropriate time. NEVER do what you are not comfortable doing.

**13. Blockers Reintegration into the group** – The blockers fall back into the formation in front of the Tail Gunner. When Trikes or Sidecars are in the formation, the blockers will fall into the formation behind the Trikes or Sidecars and in front of the Tail Gunner. When it is safe to do so the Trikes or Sidecar will waive the blockers ahead to pass them and for the blockers to reestablish themselves with the staggered motorcycle formation.

**14. Pull side-by-side at stops, start together with the left bike accelerating faster** – This helps move the group through the stops quickly and get as many bikes through the stop light as possible. As the two columns come to a stop, the right column will move up even with the left column. On the start, the bikes leave together with the left bike accelerating faster to reestablish the staggered formation. This movement is legal in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

**15. Yield to Cars (Especially at Entrance Ramps and Lane Changes)**  
– When a car needs to enter from an entrance ramp or is signaling to break into the group, —*yield and give them plenty of room.*

**16. Signal All Turns and Lane Changes with Turn Signal Lights and Hand Signals** – The Lead Motorcycle will signal for turns and lane changes. You, in turn, make the same signal to pass it back through the group and to signal any other vehicles near you. Normally, lane changes will be completed from back to front, unless the situation dictates otherwise. After signaling for lane change, the Tail Gunner will ensure a clear lane at his ride position when signaled, and then move into the new lane in order to block rolling upcoming traffic.. Before making a turn or lane change and after you have signaled for an appropriate amount of time, *Look with your Head*, (not in your mirror) to see if you have clear space. If so, then make the turn or lane change. *Never move without looking.*

**17. Parking** – Riders should pull up to the left of each rider ahead, so that everyone can immediately back into the parking space without waiting. With a little experience, the whole group can get parked quickly, which helps move everyone off the road efficiently. When the group pulls into a parking lot, don't try to be creative. Follow the parking drill with everyone else. Don't ride up behind the next rider, but pull alongside to the left, and immediately roll your bike back into the parking space (as per picture below). This is a “Best case” scenario. It will not be

feasible all times during parking. Road conditions, weather conditions and traffic will all play a role in how we park. Safety is of the up most importance.



**18. The Ride Officially Ends on Arrival at the Destination** – You can return home at any time if not returning with the group and by any route you choose. If you are unsure how to get back home, ask the Road Captain for directions. After you arrive at home, let everyone know, preferably by posting Returned to Base (RTB) on the Google Group within two hours of RTB (This is to ensure all are safe and accounted for).

**19. Debrief/Constructive Criticism**

The Ride Captain summarizes the completed group ride and “Lessons Learned” with emphasis on:

- Chapter/Group Ride Movement
- Tail Gunner ride summarization (from his perspective of behind looking forward) and known safety issues caused by:
- CVMA chapter members Cages and commercial vehicles  
Pedestrian traffic Chapter 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. This will be the first and last opportunity for any chapter members to convey constructive criticism for this group ride



20. If you're separated from the group, don't panic. We will have a pre-planned procedure in place to regroup. Don't break the law or ride beyond your skill level to catch up. 21. Common Sense – Your own safety, and therefore the safety of the group, is paramount. In all conditions, use common sense to determine what needs to be done. Do not ride beyond your abilities.

Appendix A

MSF Group Riding Hand Signals

<b>MOTORCYCLE HAND SIGNALS</b>		
 <p><b>LEFT TURN</b> Arm and hand extending left, palm facing down</p>	 <p><b>RIGHT TURN</b> Arm out bent at 90° angle up with fist clenched</p>	 <p><b>STOP</b> Arm out bent at 90° angle down with palm facing back</p>
 <p><b>SLOW DOWN</b> Arm extended straight out with palm facing down while swinging arm down</p>	 <p><b>SPEED UP</b> Arm extended straight out with palm facing up while swinging arm upward</p>	 <p><b>HAZARD IN ROAD</b> On left point with left hand On right point with right foot</p>
 <p><b>FOLLOW ME</b> Arm extended straight up with palm facing forward</p>	 <p><b>COME AROUND/ TAKE THE LEAD</b> Arm extended index finger pointing out while swinging arc from back to front</p>	 <p><b>PULL OFF</b> Arm extended index finger pointing out while swinging arc from left to over head</p>
 <p><b>SINGLE FILE</b> Arm straight up with index finger pointed up</p>	 <p><b>DOUBLE FILE</b> Arm straight up with index finger and middle finger up</p>	 <p><b>RIDE STAGGERED</b> Arm straight up with index finger and pinky up</p>
 <p><b>FUEL STOP</b> Point to fuel tank</p>	 <p><b>COMFORT STOP</b> Arm extended with clenched fist with short up and down motion</p>	 <p><b>REFRESHMENT STOP</b> Fingers closed with thumb to mouth</p>
 <p><b>TURN SIGNAL ON</b> Extend arm while opening and closing hand</p>	 <p><b>POLICE AHEAD</b> Tap top of head or helmet with palm of hand</p>	

REMEMBER WHEN RIDING IN A GROUP YOU DO NOT SURRENDER ANY  
DECISION MAKING WHEN COMES TO YOUR SAFETY

Appendix B

**RIDING ON DOD INSTALLATIONS**

**PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)** – These items are  
required for riding on DOD installations and are recommended by the  
Motorcycle Safety Foundation for off-base riding:

- **Department of Transportation (DOT) Approved Helmet.** A  
motorcycle protective helmet properly fastened (under the chin) which  
meets the standards of the DOT or Snell Memorial Foundation  
(SNELL).
- **Eye Protection.** Shatter resistant wrap around glasses, or full-face shield  
(properly attached to helmet) designed for impact and shatter resistance. A  
windshield, non-safety rated eyeglasses, or a fairing alone does not  
constitute proper eye protection. ANSI approved motorcycle goggles may be  
worn but must not restrict peripheral vision.
- **Properly Worn Long-Sleeved Garment.** A shirt or jacket that covers  
the arm to the wrist. (While ballistic motorcycle jackets and pants  
constructed of abrasion resistant materials such as leather, Kevlar,  
denim, and/or corduroy that contain impact-absorbing padding might be  
optional – they are strongly encouraged.)
- **Properly Worn Long-Legged Trousers.** Both legs covered to the ankle.  
(While ballistic motorcycle pants constructed of abrasion resistant  
materials such as leather, Kevlar, denim, and/ or corduroy that contain  
impact-absorbing padding might be optional – they are strongly  
encouraged.)
- **Appropriate Foot Wear.** It is strongly encouraged that lace up military  
boots or sturdy leather or ballistic nylon riding boots which cover the  
ankle be worn that provide the optimum protection.
- **Appropriate Hand Wear.** Full-fingered gloves or mittens.

Appendix C

**T-CLOCS**  
**WHAT TO**  
**WHAT TO LOOK FOR CHECK**

**T-TIRES & WHEELS**

<u>Tires</u>	<u>Condition</u>	<u>Tread depth, wear, weathering, evenly seated, bulges, embedded</u>	<u>Fro</u>	<u>R</u>
	<u>Air Pressure</u>	<u>Check when cold, adjust to load.</u> <u>objects.</u>	<u>tFro</u>	<u>R</u>
<u>Wheels</u>	<u>Spoke</u>	<u>Bent, broken, missing, tension, check at top of wheel: “ring” = OK</u> <u>==</u>	<u>tFro</u>	<u>R</u>
	<u>sCast</u>	<u>“thud” = loose spoke.</u> <u>Cracks, dents.</u>	<u>Fro</u>	<u>R</u>
	<u>Rim</u>	<u>Out of round/true = 5mm. Spin wheel, index against stationary</u> <u>pointer.</u>	<u>tFro</u>	<u>R</u>
	<u>s</u> <u>Bearings</u>	<u>Grab top and bottom of tire and flex: No freeplay</u> <u>(click) between hub and axle, no growl when</u> <u>spinning.</u>	<u>tFro</u>	<u>R</u>
	<u>Seal</u>	<u>Cracked, cut or torn, excessive grease on outside, reddish-brown</u> <u>around</u>	<u>tFro</u>	<u>R</u>
<u>Brakes</u>	<u>Function</u> <u>s</u>	<u>Each brake alone keeps bike from rolling.</u> <u>outside.</u>	<u>tFro</u>	<u>R</u>
	<u>Condition</u>	<u>Check pads and discs for wear.</u>	<u>tFro</u>	<u>R</u>

**C-CONTROLS**

<u>Handlebars</u>	<u>Condition</u>	<u>Bars are straight, turn freely, handgrips and bar ends are secure.</u>		
<u>Levers and Pedal</u>	<u>Condition</u>	<u>Broken, bent, cracked, mounts tight, ball ends on handlebar levers,</u>		
	<u>Pivot</u>	<u>proper adjustment.</u> <u>Lubricated.</u>		
<u>Cables</u>	<u>Condition</u> <u>s</u>	<u>Fraying, kinks, lubrication: ends and interior.</u>		
	<u>Routi</u>	<u>No interference or pulling at steering head, suspension, no sharp</u> <u>angles.</u>		
<u>Hoses</u>	<u>ng</u> <u>Condition</u>	<u>wi Cutrse,suppo cracksr,tisleakinspla , bulge ce. s, chafing,</u> <u>deterioration.</u>		
	<u>Routi</u>	<u>No interference or pulling at steering head, suspension, no sharp</u> <u>angles.</u>		
<u>Throttle</u>	<u>ng</u> <u>Operation</u>	<u>hose Movessuppo freelrtsy, snaps i placlose e. d, no revving when</u> <u>handlebars are turned.</u>		

**L-LIGHTS & ELECTRICS**

<u>Battery</u>	<u>Condition</u>	<u>Terminals; clean and tight, electrolyte level, held down securely.</u>		
	<u>Vent Tube</u>	<u>Not kinked, routed properly, not plugged.</u>		

<b><u>Headlamp</u></b>	<u>Condition</u>	<u>Cracks, reflector, mounting and adjustment system.</u>		
	<u>Ai</u>	<u>Height and right/left.</u>		
<b><u>Tail lamp/brake lamp</u></b>	<u>m Condition</u>	<u>Cracks, clean and tight.</u>		
	<u>Operation</u>	<u>Activates upon front brake/rear brake application.</u>		
<b><u>lamp Turn signals</u></b>	<u>Operation</u>	<u>Flashes correctly.</u>	<u>Fron</u> <u>t</u> <u>left</u> <u>Rea</u> <u>r</u>	<u>F</u> <u>t</u> <u>r</u> <u>t</u> <u>r</u>
<b><u>Switches</u></b>	<u>Operation</u>	<u>Allswitches function correctly: engine cut-off, hi/low beam, turn</u>	<u>left</u>	<u>r</u> <u>t</u>
<b><u>Mirrors</u></b>	<u>Condition</u>	<u>siCrgack nals., clean, tight mounts and swivel joints.</u>		
	<u>Ai</u>	<u>Adjust when seated on bike.</u>		
<b><u>Lenses &amp; Reflectors Wiring</u></b>	<u>m Condition</u> <u>Condition</u>	<u>Cracked, broken, securely mounted, excessive condensation. Fraying, chafing, insulation.</u>		

Routi

ng

**O-OIL & OTHER FLUIDS**

Pinched, no interference or pulling at steering head or suspension, wire looms and ties in place, connectors tight, clean.

<b><u>Levels</u></b>	<u>Engine Oil</u>	<u>Check warm on center stand on level ground, dipstick, sight glass.</u>	
	<u>Gear Oil, Shaft</u>	<u>Transmission, rear drive, shaft.</u>	
	<u>Drive Hydraulic</u>	<u>Brakes, clutch, reservoir or sight glass.</u>	
	<u>FluidCoola</u>	<u>Reservoir and/or coolant recovery tank — check only when cool.</u>	
	<u>ntFue</u>	<u>Tank or gauge.</u>	
<b><u>Leaks</u></b>	<u>Engine Oil</u>	<u>Gaskets, housings, seals.</u>	
	<u>l</u>		
	<u>Gear Oil, Shaft</u>	<u>Gaskets, seals, breathers.</u>	
	<u>Drive Hydraulic</u>	<u>Hoses, master cylinders, calipers.</u>	
	<u>FluidCoola</u>	<u>Radiator, hoses, tanks, fittings, pipes.</u>	

Lines, fuel valve, carbs.

**C-CHASSIS**

ntFue l

<u>Frame</u>	<u>Condition</u>	<u>Cracks at gussets, accessory mounts, look for paint lifting.</u>	
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	<u>Steering Head</u>	<u>No detent or tight spots through full travel, raise front wheel, check for play by pulling/pushing forks.</u>	
	<u>earin</u>		
	<u>Bgs</u>		
	<u>Swingarm</u>	<u>Raise rear wheel, check for play by pushing/pulling swingarm.</u>	
<u>Suspension</u>	<u>Front Forks Bushings</u>	<u>Smooth travel, equal air pressure/damping, anti-dive settings.</u>	<u>Le</u> <u>Ri</u>
	<u>Rear Shock(s)</u>	<u>Smooth travel, equal pre-load/air pressure/damping settings, linkage moves freely and is lubricated.</u>	<u>ftLe</u> <u>Ri</u>
<u>Chain or Belt</u>	<u>Tension</u>	<u>Check at tightest point.</u>	
	<u>Lubrication</u>	<u>Side plates when hot. Note: do not lubricate belts.</u>	
	<u>Sprockets</u>	<u>Teeth not hooked, securely mounted</u>	
<u>Fasteners</u>	<u>Threaded</u>	<u>Tight, missing bolts, nuts.</u>	

Broken, missing.

**S-STANDS**

Clips & Cotter Pins

<u>Center stand</u>	<u>Condition</u>	<u>Cracks, bent.</u>	
	<u>Retention</u>	<u>Springs in place, tension to hold position.</u>	
<u>Side stand</u>	<u>Condition</u>	<u>Cracks, bent (safety cut-out switch or pad equipped).</u>	
	<u>Retention</u>	<u>Springs in place, tension to hold position.</u>	