

# Fox Valley HOG

## Basic Group Riding Handbook

Thank you for joining the Fox Valley Chapter of the Harley Owners Group (HOG). Our road captains and other chapter officers have compiled the following into a “Basic Group Riding Handbook.” All members should familiarize themselves with the information in this handbook so we can enjoy the adventures of the road together safely and without incident. This handbook is intended to be a guide and nothing more. We cannot prepare you for every possible situation any more than we can provide you a list of specific events that will affect your life tomorrow. Every on-the-road encounter, incident, situation or emergency is different and remains the individual rider’s responsibility to respond appropriately. Riders must be AWARE, must be ALERT, and must be VIGILANT at all times. Our goal is to ride safe and have fun.

### **SAFETY:**

The Fox Valley HOG Chapter has adopted the following basic policy for group rides: Ride safe, be courteous, use common sense and have fun. The ultimate responsibility for safety on each ride belongs to the individual member/riders. Safety and the use of common sense are paramount.

### **BEFORE THE RIDE:**

#### **The Simple Stuff:**

- Show up for rides 15-30 minutes before the pre-ride briefing so you do not miss important information or keep other riders waiting.
- Have your gas tank full and your bladder empty.
- Check your bike thoroughly beforehand. Proper maintenance is a prerequisite for a day of safe riding.
- Check your oil level and tire pressures before you leave home.
- Have what you will need with you for the ride: water, proper clothing, etc. There is nothing more uncomfortable than being a long way from home without the proper clothing and experience a major weather change. Come prepared.
- Ride Safe. Be Courteous. Use Common Sense. Have Fun!

**Alcohol Policy:** The consumption and use of alcohol is a serious personal responsibility involving the safety of family, friends, and the individual. Alcohol consumption before or during a motorcycling activity is not safe. Fox Valley HOG does not allow the use of alcohol or illicit drugs before or during a riding event and does not furnish alcohol at chapter events. Riders whose skills are observed, or suspected, to be impaired by drugs or alcohol before riding cannot join a ride. Riders using drugs or alcohol while riding will be asked to leave the ride. It is the responsibility of each Fox Valley HOG Chapter member to support the consistent enforcement of this policy.

**Pre-Ride Briefing:** Immediately prior to departure, the Lead Road Captain will give a pre-ride briefing to go over the ride route and review group riding communications (signals) and safety topics. Be patient and give your full attention. This information must be covered at the beginning of each and every group ride. This may not be your first group ride, but, it could be the first group ride for the person riding in front of you. This pre-ride briefing is for safety. Ask questions, if necessary, and make certain you have all the information you need regarding the ride. This is also a good time to inform Road Captains what they need to know about you and your riding limitations. They will be happy to accommodate any special condition they can, e.g. if you prefer to ride up front or in the rear of the group, or if you know you will need to break off from the group prior to reaching the destination.

#### **DISCLAIMER:**

EVERY EFFORT HAS BEEN MADE TO ENSURE THE INFORMATION CONTAINED WITHIN THIS HANDBOOK IS CURRENT AND ACCURATE. HOWEVER, NEITHER THE FOX VALLEY H.O.G. CHAPTER, HERITAGE HARLEY- DAVIDSON, NOR THE HARLEY-DAVIDSON MOTOR COMPANY MAKE ANY CLAIMS AS TO THE ACCURACY OF THE INFORMATION PUBLISHED.

**Release Waiver Forms:** All members participating in a chapter-sponsored ride must sign “The Ride Sheet” and complete the release forms for their non-member guests prior to that day’s ride. A member may only sponsor one guest per ride. There are three types of waivers that must be filled out and signed by the member and the guest. They are:

- **Chapter Event Release Form for Adults (18 or older)**
  - This release form must be signed by all adult participants in any chapter event if the individual is not a member of the local chapter hosting the event
  - Was a member of the host chapter but has not renewed their expired membership by signing the Chapter Member Enrollment Form and Release for the year in which the event occurs
- **Chapter Event Release Form for Minors (17 and under)**
  - This release form must be signed by a minor’s parent or guardian whenever a minor participates in any chapter event other than a chapter meeting, **even if the minor is a member of the chapter.**
- **Minors Assumption of Risk Acknowledgement (12 to 17 years old)**
  - A minor, aged 12 or above, must sign this form when participating in any chapter event other than a chapter meeting. Minors aged 12 or above must have this form AND the Chapter Event Release Form for Minors filled out and signed.

**Key Group Ride Personnel:**

- **Head Road Captain:** Responsible for ride organization and training the Road Captain staff.
- **Safety Officer:** Promotes safety and supports the Road Captains.
- **Road Captains:** (Designated by a patch) are assigned to each chapter ride and are responsible for ensuring the ride is conducted safely. Assist the Head Road Captain and answer questions from riders.
- **Lead Road Captain:** The Road Captain that rides at the front of the group and is in charge of leading the ride.
- **Mid-Pack Road Captain(s):** According to size of group, this Road Captain(s) will ride in the middle and assist when/where needed.
- **Sweep Road Captain(s):** Will also be positioned at the back of the group. Known as “the Sweep,” they will watch over the group and provide assistance to any rider that may require help.



**New Riders and Riders with Speed Restrictions:** Rides will be conducted to the level of the rider with the least experience or greatest limitations. Meaning, we will try to ride no faster than necessary to support inexperienced riders, or mechanical limitations like the –mph break-in limitation on a new bike. If the situation dictates, a special ride group may be formed for the limited rider or riders. New riders and new bikes should ride behind the Lead Road Captain. The reasons are: The closer to the front, the slower you ride. You are less likely to be separated from the Lead Road Captain by traffic at a stoplight. However, if you are not comfortable riding near the front, you can ride anywhere in the group you like, though it may be a good idea to ride near a Road Captain, in case you have questions or concerns during the ride. The ride pace is limited to match break-in speed for new motorcycles.

**Staging or Forming Up:** This is an unceremonious activity. When the Lead Road Captain says it is time to form up and leave, everyone should line up behind him or her in a two by two formation. If you feel more comfortable up front behind the Lead Road Captain don’t feel bashful about telling someone you need to position yourself in front of them. If you would rather ask a Road Captain to request a position in the group for you, you may do that as well.

## Be Ready To Ride

Please take a moment before any ride to perform a self-evaluation. Perform a mental check of these key areas:

- Are you well?
- Have you had enough sleep?
- Have you taken something that would impair your judgment or reflexes, making it unwise and unsafe to ride?
- Do you have proper riding attire?
- You should tell a Road Captain your limitations and concerns. Don't be shy!

The above key areas are important to ensure the safety of yourself and others in the group. We cannot stress enough the importance of proper riding attire. At the minimum, you should wear jeans, a long sleeve shirt and boots. If you chose to wear sneakers or shorts be prepared to have a Road Captain tell you that you can't go on the ride. Your safety is the Road Captain's primary concern and it should be yours as well.

Riders need to take some simple actions prior to the ride to ensure their motorcycle is ready for the road. Check your motorcycle's general condition, critical components, and fluid levels prior to every ride to help ensure a safe ride.

### Make Sure Your Bike is Ready To Ride:

A common checklist used to help you remember the exact items you need to check is T-CLOCK. The acronym T-CLOCK stands for:

- T** - Tires & Wheels
- C** - Cables & Controls
- L** - Lights,
- O** - Oil & Fluids
- C** - Chain & Chassis
- K** - Kickstand (side stand or jiffy stand)

T-CLOCK ITEM	WHAT TO CHECK	WHAT TO LOOK FOR	CHECKOFF	
<b>T - TIRES &amp; WHEELS</b>				
Tires	Condition	Tread depth, wear, weathering, evenly seated, bulges, embedded objects	Front	Rear
Air Pressure		Check when cold, adjust to load/speed		
Wheels	Spokes	Equal tension, straight, bottom, check all spokes	Front	Rear
Cast		Cracks or dents	Front	Rear
Rims		Distortion, bent, cracks, loose, loose nuts	Front	Rear
Beatings		Check top and bottom of tire, check for loose nuts (lock) between hub and tire, check for loose nuts between tire and wheel	Front	Rear
Beats		Check for loose nuts, check for loose nuts	Front	Rear
<b>C - CONTROLS</b>				
Levers	Condition	Broken, bent, loose, not moving, not full stroke	Left	Right
Pivots		Loose, bent, not moving		
Cables	Condition	Loose, bent, not moving, not full stroke		
Routing		Check for proper routing, check for proper routing		
Handles	Condition	Check for proper routing, check for proper routing		
Throttle	Condition	Check for proper routing, check for proper routing		
<b>L - LIGHTS</b>				
Batteries	Condition	Terminals, clean and tight, electrolyte level, held down securely		
Headlight	Condition	Not covered, covered properly, not plugged		
Lenses	Condition	Cracked, broken, loose, mounted, secure		
Reflector	Condition	Cracked, broken, loose, mounted, secure		
Wiring	Condition	Routing, check for proper routing, check for proper routing		
Headlamp	Condition	Check for proper routing, check for proper routing		
Alignment	Condition	Height and adjust		

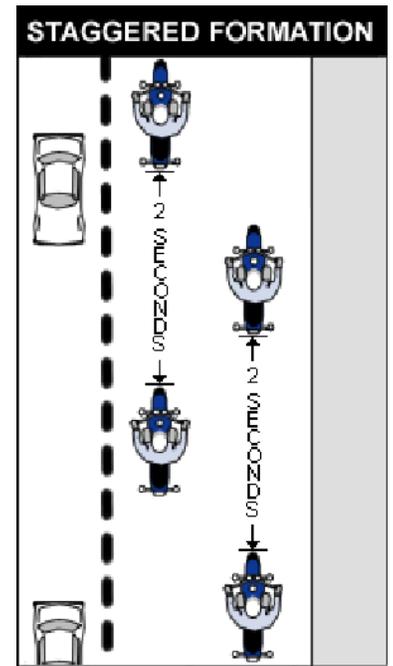
**ON THE ROAD Ride Your Own Ride:** Although you are part of a group, you are also an individual and the sole operator of your bike. "Ride your own ride" is the term used to emphasize that you must take responsibility for your riding. Ride in the manner that is comfortable and safe for you. Never ride above your personal comfort level or the limits of your motorcycle. Advise the Lead Road Captain during the pre-ride briefing of any issues or concerns that you may have. If, during the ride, you feel pressured or uncomfortable, pull out of the group when safe to do so and take up a position in front of the Sweep. The Sweep will ride at your comfort level and appreciate your good judgment in taking a positive safe action. If the two of you fall behind the group, another road captain will assume the Sweep's duties for the group.

**Formation Riding:** When riding in a group, the importance of formation riding is critical to the safety of all riders within the group. It is important to know the various formations and the basic rules to follow to ensure a comfortable and safe ride. Remember you are riding in a group, so not only do you have to think of yourself, but you have to be aware of the other riders around you. Try to maintain a consistent interval between you and the other riders. Inconsistently opening and closing a gap can cause the group to experience "an accordion effect."

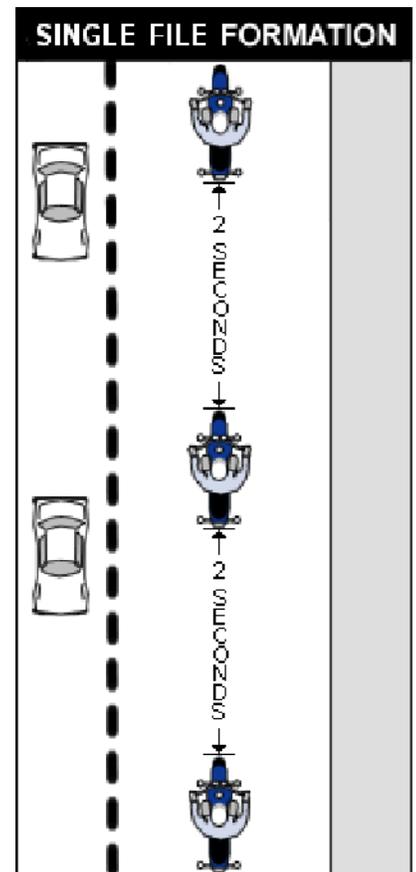
Formation group riding is intended to promote safety by increasing our visibility to automobile drivers. It is not intended to be mandatory if a situation dictates otherwise. Staggered formation, single file adjustments, or emergency evasive action should take place safely. Safety remains the prevailing factor for all rides. Formation adjustments may be warranted and necessary without the Lead Road Captain executing and passing back a signal. For example, a narrow or winding section of the road may require a change from the staggered to single file formation. Be alert and be aware of those around you and, above all, be safe.

**Staggered Formation:** The standard group riding formation will be the staggered formation. The Lead Road Captain will always lead the group from the left position of the lane. Riders will ride in a double file line within a single lane at a staggered interval. This interval generally consists of two seconds between you and the rider directly in front of you and one second between you and the rider immediately to your left or right. However, give yourself enough room to feel comfortable and provide enough room to stop in the event of an emergency. Try not to allow yourself too much space between you and the rider in front of you as this can cause the group to become drawn-out or lengthened. The best way to determine proper distance is to check to see if you are able to see the face in the mirror of the rider diagonally to your right or left in front of you. If for any reason a “hole”, or gap, is created in a staggered riding formation, for instance a rider drops out, it is desirable to preserve the integrity of the formation by filling the gap. If you notice a gap, **Do not cross from one side of the formation to the other** to fill the gap.

Instead, when possible, wave the rider behind you to move up and fill the gap. Each rider in the line, behind the gap, shall switch to the open spot. If you are not comfortable taking your hands off of the controls to wave someone up, or if you are not comfortable with someone passing you in your lane, then don't attempt this. If you wave someone forward and they do not move up, wave them up again, if they still don't move up, let it go. They may not be comfortable passing another bike in their lane. Eventually, when we reach a stop sign or light, the group will compress and the gap will be filled. The hand signal for staggered formation is the left hand raised in the two-finger sign and the wrist rotated back and forth on a vertical axis. (See Hand Signals on the back page)



**Single File Formation:** The group will be put into single file by the Lead Road Captain because of narrow or curvy roads, obstacles or other potential hazards that would not be appropriate for a staggered formation. Again, the general distance between you and the rider in front of you is two seconds. However, for extremely curvy roads you may want to expand this distance to fit your comfort level. The hand signal is the left hand raised with the index finger pointing up. (See Hand Signals on the back page)



**Trikes and Motorcycles with Side-cars:** For obvious reasons, trikes and motorcycles with sidecars cannot ride in a staggered formation. These vehicles should stay centered in their lane regardless of the rest of the group's formation. Trikes and motorcycles with side-cars should line up in the very back of the group, just ahead of the Sweep, in order to minimize the impact of formation changes on the rest of the group.

**Passing:** Fox Valley HOG does not pass other vehicles when traveling on two lane roads. The only time we will pass is when the slower vehicle has moved to the side in order to allow us to pass safely. We will go to single file in these situations to pass the vehicle safely.

**Traffic:** Automobiles will sometimes need to merge into our group. In most cases, they do not want to be in the middle of a bunch of “bikers” and will move out of the group as soon as possible. Be considerate; let them in, and let them out. It is simple physics that cars weigh more than bikes. If we both try to occupy the same lane at the same time, we lose. The car may go to the body shop, but we end up going to the hospital.

**Lane Changes:** When the Lead Road Captain wants to change lanes, the standard hand signal and/or turn signal will be given. All riders will pass the turn signals back; however no one should begin their lane change until the Sweep Road Captain has changed lanes and created a block for the other riders. Then each rider should change lanes from the rear forward in turn, after checking to ensure the lane is clear. If a car is next to you, wave the car forward and change lanes after they have passed. Try not to change lanes in front of a car, as this will only trap the car in our group.

**Merging onto Interstate Highways:** Merging onto a freeway requires alertness and good judgment. Unlike Lane Changes, merging onto and exiting from freeways will be from the front to the rear. Merging as a group may not be possible; therefore you should merge safely even if this means that cars are in the midst of our group. Do not attempt to pass cars in order to catch the group, independent actions can lead to confusion and further fragment the group. If necessary, Road Captains may take corrective actions to get the group back together. In most cases, however, cars will move out of the formation, allowing us to regroup in time.

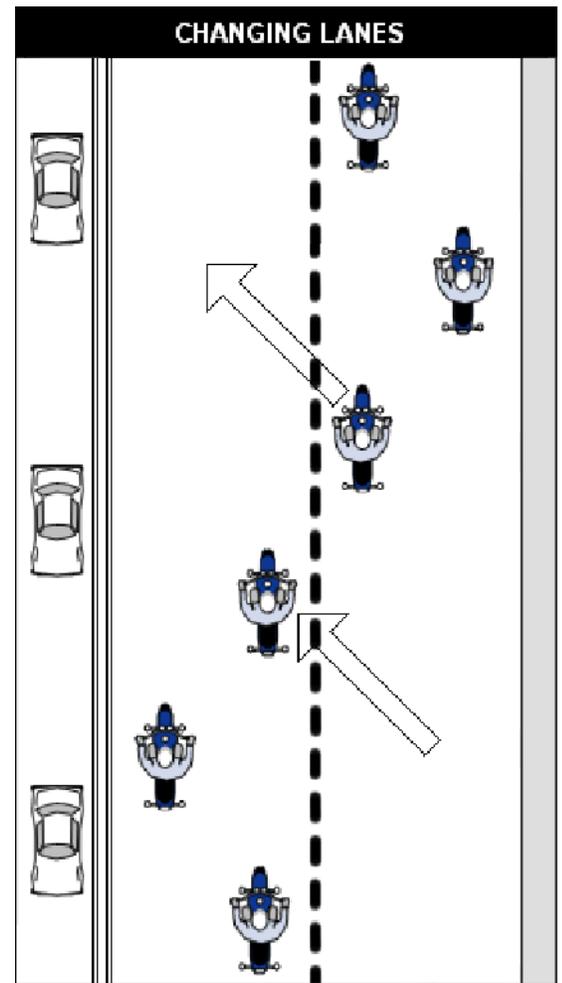
**Passing Large Trucks:** The key here is to “BE SEEN.” Assume you are not easily seen and you will probably be correct in that assumption. Depending upon the traffic conditions, the Lead Road Captain may give the single file signal. Everyone should move to the opposite side of the lane furthest away from the truck, providing a larger space cushion between you and the truck. It is a general rule that if you cannot see the truck driver’s face in his rear-view mirror, he cannot see you either.

**Non-Group Bikes Overtaking Our Group:** Sometimes other bikes will overtake our group from the rear. This is a concern on two-lane twisty roads. The group will likely already be in single file so move as far to the right as possible and allow the faster rider to pass safely and with as much safety consideration as necessary for the both of you. If possible, wave them forward so that they know that you know to expect them. **Do not intentionally block a motorcyclist from attempting to pass; this only makes a bad situation more unsafe.**

**Turns:** The Lead Road Captain will signal turns using standard hand and turn signals. Duplicate the signal and pass it back. Maintain lane position throughout the turn in order to avoid crowding fellow riders.

**Parked Cars:** Group rides will usually stay away from the curb lane if there are parked cars. The reason is to avoid suddenly opened car doors, and people and/or animals darting out from between parked cars. On two lane roads, or where this lane cannot be avoided, the Lead Road Captain will most likely take the group to single file and move the group to the left away from the parked cars.

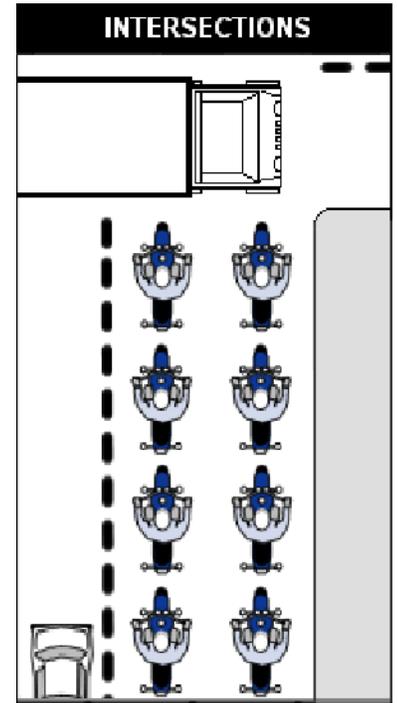
**Road Hazards:** If you see a hazard such as a pothole, rock, tire tread, or gravel, point to it so that the rider behind you sees the problem also. Point with your foot if possible, keeping your hands on the controls. (See Hand Signals on the back page) Bicyclists are only hazardous if they are infringing onto the lane we are traveling in. If bicyclists are in the bike lane, there is no need to point them out, just be cautious and considerate when passing them. Be careful if you do point out a bicyclist with your foot, we don’t want them to think we are trying to kick them.



**Intersections:** Intersections are one of the more dangerous areas as traffic may come from many different directions including from behind. The red light provides no physical barrier to traffic. Be aware – be alert.

When stopping as a group at an intersection, if single file, return to staggered. Then break staggered formation and pull up beside the bike adjacent to you. This will reduce the length of the group by half. Because the group is half as long it will take half the time to clear the intersection and increase the odds of keeping the group intact. When starting back up, start off together and stay in this side-by-side until you are through the intersection, then the bike on the left should pull ahead of the bike on the right to return to a staggered formation. Obey traffic laws.

Do not speed up in order to “beat the light” at an intersection. It is common for groups to get split up at a signal light. Again, we will never leave riders to fend for themselves. Once the Lead Road Captain is aware of the break in the group, he or she will take corrective actions to get the group back together. Although it is legal in Illinois for a vehicle to turn right on a red light, it is not mandatory, nor a good practice for group riding. If you are stopped at a red light, do not turn right, again the Lead Road Captain will work to get the group back together and another road captain may take over the lead of the broken pack to reunite riders..



**Need to Drop Back or Stop?** A rider may need to drop out of the group and take up a position in front of the Sweep so they can adjust for their special needs, or the rider may need to stop. Whatever the need, this procedure must be done safely. There are three methods for moving out of the group.

- (1) If on a multi-lane road, the rider signals to change lanes, does so, then waves the other riders to pass.
- (2) The rider keeps to their side of the lane and waves the other riders to pass.
- (3) If a rider has a serious need to drop back or stop, the rider signals the riders behind for more space and pulls off the road when it can be done safely. Immediately wave other riders to pass.

**Fox Valley H.O.G WILL NEVER LEAVE A RIDER STRANDED.** The Sweep or another Road Captain will stay behind to assist any rider that needs to pull off and leave the group.

**Broken Pack:** Traffic lights, riders dropping out, and other traffic conditions will often break up the group. If you notice that the group has become split off behind you, pass the “Broken Pack” signal, a closed fist held straight up, forward to the Lead Road Captain. If you put up the signal and the bike in front of you fails to pass it forward, it may be necessary to give a polite tap on the horn to get their attention. The sooner that signal gets passed forward, the sooner the Lead Road Captain can take corrective measures. If you find that you end up leading a group that has become split from the original group, don’t panic, carry on just as you have been. The Lead Road Captain will realize the group has become split and will slow down or pull over so that you and the rest of the group can rejoin. If necessary, another Road Captain in your split-off group may pull up and take over leading the split group. In any case, split groups should continue on to the next destination or planned stop.

**Parking:** Try to plan ahead when parking and, if possible, back into a parking spot so your rear tire is against the curb. Try to park so any pushing that may need to be done when leaving will be done downhill.

## AT THE DESTINATION

**Getting Home:** Part of the fun of group riding is getting out and learning roads you have never been on before. This is fine, as long as someone is leading you, but how do you get home? Typically road captains, or other experienced riders will form up smaller groups going back. If you don’t hear of one, ask. Don’t be shy; feel free to ask the Lead Road Captain who is leading a group back will never leave you stranded, not even at a restaurant.

**Feedback:** Once the ride reaches the destination, please let the Lead Road Captain know how you enjoyed the ride. Our goal is to ensure that you always ride safe and have fun.

# HAND SIGNALS



**Single File** – Hand raised high above the head with the index finger pointed upward.



**Staggered** – Hand raised high above the head with the two finger sign given and rotating the wrist.



**Saddle Up, Start Your Engine** – Left arm raised up high above your head with index finger pointed upward and moving in a circular motion.



**Left Turn** – Left arm straight out to the side with open hand or pointing to the left.



**Right Turn** – Left arm out to the side bent at the elbow and hand or fist pointed upward.



**Broken Pack** - Hand raised high above the head formed in a fist and the signaling arm is straight. Maintain this position until the rider in front of you gives the signal. This signal needs to reach the Road Captain leading the group so he knows to either slow down or to safely pull the group over. You may honk your horn to get the riders attention in front of you to assist in getting this signal passed to the front. Anytime you pass through an intersection you should look in your rear view mirror to see if anyone behind you gets stopped at the intersection. If every rider in the group gets in the habit of checking their mirrors after an intersection they will see the Group Broken signal and pass it forward to the leader.



**Slow Down** – Left arm outstretched and downward with hand flat, palm facing down moving in a downward motion.



**Speed Up** – Left arm outstretched and downward with hand flat, palm facing up moving in an upward motion.



**Road Hazard on the Right** – Extend your right leg toward the road hazard pointing with your foot.



**Road Hazard on the Left** - Extend your left leg toward the road hazard pointing with your foot.