

Hidden Dangers

(It's not what you think)

Part deux: Chapter level

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Membership in a motorcycle group can be a rewarding thing. Members usually have something in common, making the recreational aspect also a social connection. An organizational structure with leadership strives to provide meaningful activities. Most of these groups have written by-laws or Procedures to govern everything from membership qualification to member conduct. This is where the Hidden Dangers lie.

Consider Procedures or by-laws to be a contract that all members must follow. Make that contract airtight to avoid club or member exposure.

Written Procedures or by-laws protect or expose the membership, especially the Board of Directors, depending upon how comprehensive they are. Questions of membership conduct often focus on whether the action was a sanction of, or a failure to follow, the club guidelines. In the event of a liability claim, the courts will certainly want to see your Procedures or by-laws that govern group activities. This is the Civil Liability exposure. There is also exposure to physical injury, but more on that in a moment.

Take it from me, writing expectations and performance standards and then organizing them into a meaningful manual is a difficult task. Because of this, most club members lack the training or experience to produce a comprehensive Procedures Manual that adequately addresses salient issues. If your group has such talented members, you are fortunate.

Many clubs inherit older Procedure Manuals or by-laws from previous years. Occasional revisions or updates have been done, but some important details often remain out of date, or fail to address issues that expose members to risk; both physical and civil liability.

Most of the Procedures or by-laws list pretty standard operations. Your group or Chapter can decide upon the format and content of the general rules and regulations. Whatever the format, here is the most important, safety-related member expectations:

Group Riding Protocol

- This is very important. It is potentially the most sensitive to liability or injury and should be carefully written with input from your Safety Officer.
- Group riding is one of the most dangerous motorcycle activities, outside of impaired drivers, so provide clear guidelines.

- Emphasize that group leaders must be competent riders, and follow the established protocol.
- Emphasis must also be on obeying all traffic laws.
- Do not condone illegal group conduct, i.e., running stop signs or signals to stay together.

Good Protocols or by-laws will help to ensure that all members enjoy the safest, most rewarding aspects of belonging to a group. If you help create your procedures or by-laws, consider this as a way to protect your interests. If you are a member, and are asked to ratify or approve your procedures or by-laws, read them carefully before voting.

Go forth and create.