

Convoy Procedure on the Highway.

As the title infers, this procedure is intended as a guide for Club travel on sealed roads (not dirt roads) where the convoy can reasonably expect to maintain 100 kilometres per hour in safety. For further information on convoy procedure, refer to section 11 in the Club Rules and Codes Manual.

When you sign on and are accepted to join a trip, you gain the following.

1. Safety and backup from travelling in a group in remote locations.
2. Less experienced members can draw on the combined knowledge and experience of the group as a whole.
3. Group Camaraderie.
4. The opportunity to see new places and experience the history firsthand.
5. The opportunity to participate and enjoy the time and effort put in by the trip leader to organise a trip.

When you sign on and are accepted to go on a trip you are also agreeing to relinquish some of your rights as an individual. The main ones being:

1. You must accept that the trip leader(s) are in charge and must accept any legal instructions from them.
2. It is expected that by your actions you do not hold up the group nor do anything to the detriment of the group as whole, except of course, in the case of illness or a breakdown.

Ideally, the convoy should stick together with sufficient distance from each other to allow for road safety and good radio communications between vehicles.

However, on several trips, I have noted a tendency for convoys to spread out to the point where the last vehicles are unable to receive the trip leader's radio transmissions. This in turn requires messages to have to be relayed back and forth through the convoy. This can create confusion and increases the probability of incorrect information being relayed.

As a rule of thumb our UHF C/B's have a range of 4 to 5km. So to keep a group of vehicles within clear radio range should not be difficult. (Traffic hold ups etc. will create exceptions of course).

Our convoys generally try to maintain a speed of 100 kilometres per hour on the highway. This equates to 1.6666 kilometres per minute or 27.777 metres per second.

We all should apply the *3 second rule* in our every day driving. i.e. in good conditions you leave a minimum 3 seconds delay between you and the vehicle in front. At 100 kilometres per hour this equates to 83.3 metres spacing between vehicles.

However, to allow other vehicles room to overtake safely through the convoy we should leave a 4 seconds delay between vehicles. This equates to 111.1 metres spacing at 100 kilometres per hour.

Even allowing an 8 second gap between vehicles equates to 222.2 metres spacing at 100 kilometres per hour.

If this approximate spacing is maintained, even a 15 vehicle convoy will only extend out to a maximum of 3.5 kilometres, which is well within the range of our radios.

How to estimate the distance to the vehicle in front.

1. Watch the vehicle ahead. Note when it passes a prominent feature such as a road sign, side road, white post or even a particular tree or shrub.
2. Start counting the seconds. (One thousand, two thousand, three thousand and so on).
3. Stop counting when your vehicle reaches the same feature.
4. If your count is less than 3 seconds, you are too close to the vehicle in front.
5. If your count is more than 8 seconds, you are too far behind the vehicle in front.

Catch up Procedure.

1. You realise you are too far behind the preceding vehicle or you receive a call on the radio pointing out your lapse.
2. When safe to do so accelerate to no more than the posted speed limit. Maintain the posted speed limit where safe to do so until you are back to the recommended distance from the preceding vehicle.
3. Resume the 100 kilometres per hour convoy speed and maintain your position in the convoy.

On past trips, trip leaders and other convoy members have not pulled wayward drivers into line. This was probably due to not wanting to embarrass or offend members of the club.

On relatively short trips it is not a big issue.

However, on long drives to get to a destination it can impact significantly on trip planning and reduce quality time at points of interest and result in some places not being visited because of a lack of time. It also inconveniences other club members and may result in a convoy getting home very late.

Sometimes when the convoy is on the road, you may need to stop for a variety of reasons, such as a toilet stop, tyre troubles, mechanical issues or stowed gear coming loose etc. Make sure you let the trip leader know by radio what the issue is that you are dealing with so that the trip leader can be aware of the problem and can make a decision on whether to stop the whole convoy for a while or to continue proceeding at a slower pace until the other vehicle catches up. The responsibility for the convoy's progress lies with the trip leader/s.