



# **Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association (CVMA)**

## **National Protocol**

**Revision: B**

**Effective Date: February 29, 2012 W/Change 1 Posted**

### **Introduction**

The intent of this document is to give you a brief overview of the structure and philosophy of the traditional Motorcycle Club (MC). The information is intended to provide the CVMA Membership with some essential information that is critical in creating and maintaining a peaceful and respectful understanding between members of the multiple and diverse motorcycling organizations that share the streets and highways. It does not necessarily express the feelings or priorities of any particular club, as all clubs differ in some points. Regardless of the basic philosophy of the CVMA, it is important for you, as a member, to understand the perspectives of MCs that you may be associating with from time to time. Because your CVMA membership is fundamentally influenced by motorcycles, you are part of the motorcycle community. Not counting your area's dominant MC or their support clubs, there are Veterans Clubs, Motorcycle Ministries, Motorcycle Rights Organizations (MRO), Riding Clubs (RC), Fireman & Cop Clubs, Mom & Pop Clubs and Independents. Of all the types of organizations within this community, the 1% MC stands apart and ranks highest in stature.

A serious MC commands respect for one or both of two reasons. Those who are properly informed recognize the deep level of personal commitment and self-discipline that a man has to demonstrate and maintain in order to wear a 1% MC back-patch (to be politically correct, there are no 1% MCs that allow women to be full patch members; therefore, clubs that allow women are by nature not 1% clubs). They understand that it is comparable to a religion or a full time profession for the individual. They also realize that the clubs back-patch or "colors" are closely guarded and the membership process is long and demanding. They respect patch

holders for what they have accomplished by being able to earn and keep the patch they wear. This respect is born out of recognition of dedication and accomplishment.

Those who are less informed see only the surface. They see the vigilance of mutual support. The potential dangers of invoking a response from a well-organized unit that travels in numbers and is always prepared for confrontation. They know that no one can provoke one club member without having to answer to the entire club, and that such an answer is a point of honor that must come, to the last man. The type of respect that this generates is one that is born out of fear. This is especially true as it pertains to those persons outside of the motorcycle community. This segment of society is by far the larger, and therefore represents a larger market for any fundraising activities that the club might undertake.

It stands to reason that cultivating a relationship with these people is important. To be perceived by them as “biker trash” would be a disadvantage to the club. Therefore, they will conduct themselves as upstanding citizens and good neighbors. Their goal is to be admired and respected by the general public, rather than feared. The serious MC will conduct itself publicly in a highly professional manner. They will not go out of their way to cause trouble or to present themselves as an intimidating force without purpose or provocation.

There are many lesser clubs whose membership is made up of equally lesser individuals. These clubs, without a continual show of strength, would have no respect at all. The majority of these types of clubs are short lived; however, the general public does not draw a distinction between different club colors. In many cases, they simply can't tell the difference and we are all “biker trash” to them. If one club causes a problem that reaches the public sector, the offending club's actual identity is either confused or ignored and the heat comes down on everyone. However, MCs tend to police themselves in order to avoid such incidents.

There is also a natural hierarchy that is recognized between motorcycle clubs themselves. The strongest and most established club will assume charge of the particular area or state in which they ride. This dominant club will for reasons that are beneficial to all:

- Authorize the establishment of new clubs within the state.
- Will disband clubs that cause continual problems.
- Act as mediators to resolve problems between existing clubs.
- Step in and enforce their own solution if the feuding clubs cannot come to terms on their own.
- Provide a communications link and coordinate intra club events.
- Call on the clubs within a state for additional support, if needed, when dealing with harassment or other external pressure.

It is also not uncommon for the dominant club of an area to select some of their prospects from the best of the ranks of the other clubs. In fact some clubs have been established with this sole purpose in mind. If it were not for the dominant club of a state taking this leadership position, clubs would not enjoy the luxury of putting their time and resources to the benefit of

their individual brother or sisterhood. Nor would we enjoy the mobility and freedom of movement that comes with peace and order.

Within the MC itself, officers are elected to the traditional posts of President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Sergeant at Arms, etc. In addition, you will find the less traditional posts of Road Captain, Enforcer, and WarLord. The Road Captain is responsible for the logistics of effectively moving the club from point A to point B. The Enforcer answers only to the President and sees that the President's orders are carried out. He will also be the one who travels if a problem has to be addressed at a distance. The WarLord is in charge of tactics and strategies in times of stress. In some instances, he is also responsible for the club's security issues. In most clubs, the positions of WarLord and Enforcer are combined and may carry the name of either. In most cases, the patch-holder was a "hang around" for the club for at least a year. Before that, they were a long-standing acquaintance and their attitude and overall conduct was well known. They then prospected for the club from one to two years before they were awarded their patch.

Of all the things in this person's life, their loyalty and commitment to the well-being of their club comes first, above family, friends, job, personnel possessions and personal safety. There is never, repeat never, any doubt or time spent on even considering which comes first. The only thing that approaches their commitment to the club is their commitment to their brothers or sisters. But even here, the interest of the club always comes before that of the individual. They know that their family can walk out on them without a second's notice; they can lose their job overnight, even for good; close friends come and go with time. But the club and their brothers or sisters will always be there for them. It is one of the few, if not the only thing, that can be counted on. They know this because they themselves are committed to always being there for them.

To be certain that this ethic and standard of attitude is carried by new members, they participate in conditioning, educating, and at times testing the club's prospects or "prospective members." As such, before they allow another person to wear their colors, as a symbol of their mutual commitment, they will feel certain that the new member brings with them the same loyalty and dedication that they themselves display. They have the attitude that there are two types of people in the world: their brothers or sisters, and those who are a potential threat to the club. For this reason they will not discuss club related business, membership numbers, the club's movements or personal information about their brothers or sisters with anyone outside the club. Anything that could possibly be used by anyone to piece together an informative picture of the club is a very serious security issue.

Wearing a patch is more than getting together for good times. It is also getting together in bad times. It constitutes a lot of work. It is committing yourself to a lifestyle in which you do not look for how your brothers or sisters might help you, but ways in which you can be of help to them. You always look to give, but never expect to receive.

Now all of this may sound very idealistic to you, and in some cases it is just that. But, it is an ideal that all clubs profess and are always striving to achieve in principle and practice. MC patch-holders are people too. They have good and bad days; they have jobs, families, and normal everyday problems and concerns just like anyone else. There are those who no matter what you say or do, it will not be right with them. Just like with any group, you will find both good and bad. In closing, you should be aware of a "golden rule" of conduct that you should bear in mind while traveling in the motorcycle community circles: "If you give respect, you will get respect. If you show a lack of respect, you will be treated like an outcast!"

### **Points to Remember**

1. Protocol and Respect are primary rules when dealing with an MC patch-holder. If you are formally introduced to an MC patch-holder, make sure that you or the person doing the introduction know what association you belong to and if you are an officer and what position you hold. Under no circumstances should you interrupt to correct a mistake while that person is introducing you or while they are talking. Wait till the introduction is done, then politely introduce yourself correctly i.e. "Jim Smith, Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association, Any Town, USA," "John Johnson, Chapter Sergeant-at-Arms, Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association, Any Town, USA" or "Bob Williams, State Representative, Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association, Any Town, USA." Use your name and not your road name or nickname, these may come later.

2. Greet them as you would anyone else that you meet and wait until the offer is made to shake hands.

- Always remove your glove before shaking someone's hand; it's just a basic form of courtesy.

However:

- Do not interrupt; wait for them to acknowledge you.
- Do not be offended or make a big deal if they do not offer to shake your hand. Many times they want to get to know about you and your club a little better before they will offer to shake your hand.

3. An MC patch-holder may not, and many times will not, acknowledge your wife or girlfriend, especially upon a first meeting and should not be considered disrespectful.

4. In regard to women who are with a MC club, but not in the club, "Ol' Lady" is not a negative or derogatory term; it's just a slang term commonly used. "Property Of" patches show support for their man and the club he's associated with.

5. "SHOW RESPECT." That's the top priority with them and is worth repeating!

6. Never be quick to walk up to a MC patch-holder in a public setting, even if you already know them or your groups are on friendly terms. If you want to greet them, walk up slowly and wait for them to acknowledge you. Do not interrupt when they are with other members. Wait until they acknowledge you first. Never touch them or put your arm around them like a buddy. Don't put your hand out to shake theirs; wait for them to extend their hand first. If for some reason you're not acknowledged, just keep walking.

7. If you need to discuss an issue with an MC, the correct way is to ask for a meeting. This should be done by the local Chapter Chain of Command, State or Regional Representatives going through the respective MCs Sergeant-at-Arms and requesting a sit-down.

8. Most clubs realize that the CVMA is not an MC but more like an RC. When approached, be aware that most patch-holders will want to deal with the local Chapter Chain of Command, State or Regional Representatives.

9. Always know where you are when speaking about an MC, and never say anything about them in public because you never know when that woman, man or kid in regular clothes standing near you might be one of them, a family member or a "support member." Patch-holders do not always wear their colors. By the time the story gets back to the dominate club in your area, it will have been changed many times over and could be blown up way out of proportion.

10. Anything said about an MC between CVMA members is our business only. If comments, even those said in a joking manner were to get out, problems could start. Discussion outside the privacy of the CVMA can start rumors, which could cause a lot of problems for not only the chapter, but also for other chapters in and out of the state.

11. If for some reason you have to discuss something while in public, take that person you need to talk to aside, keep your voice down, be aware of anyone coming within listening distance and say as little as possible so anyone else can't overhear it and misunderstand what you're talking about.

12. If anyone in your group knows an MC patch-holder, do not allow them to throw the club's name, the patch-holders' name, nickname or road name around like they are best friends . . . even if you are. Many clubs consider that as a major disrespect to the whole club.

13. Watch where you wear your patch and it's just common sense to stay in numbers when wearing the patch. Some MCs can be very territorial and some clubs don't see any difference between an Association, a RC and a MC, good or bad. If you are unsure of the areas or places normally frequented by MCs, find out from your local CVMA Chapter Officers. If you are planning on traveling and are concerned about what the situation may be in regard to the relationship with the local motorcycle clubs in the areas you'll be traveling through or staying in, your Chapter Officers should be able to find something out by contacting the Chapter, State or Regional officers in the areas you will be in.

14. You have to decide whether or not you want to show respect by going to any MC functions or if you want to avoid them all together. If you do choose to show respect and go, you can do this in a way that may make you feel more at ease by going to one of their support club functions instead of the top club's function (if they have a support patch then you're still indirectly showing the top club respect). But if you do go, then you also have to go to any rival clubs' function or you'll be telling everyone that the CVMA is not a "neutral association" as we have always stated. (Example: If you go to the Club A's function then you have to go to Club B's function, etc.) You have to decide how you want to stay neutral, by going or not going and you have to let all the other area chapters know if you're going too, so they're not in the dark and we can all stay on top of things.

A better way to support them and still give the appearance of being a neutral association is to attend only "open to the public" events that an MC may be sponsoring. If you feel that you do want or need to go to a "limited event", then you'll have to go representing yourself as yourself, without wearing any patches identifying your affiliation to the CVMA. Remember, if you're wearing your CVMA patch or soft-colors, you are considered by everyone to be representing the CVMA. If anything were to turn sour, then the whole association could wind up with problems down the road. Also, once the rivals of that club you visited find out, and they will within a day or two, then they will see you as no longer being neutral and you could be considered a rival of theirs too.

15. Do not wear your CVMA patch into an MC clubhouse unless you have been invited for a "sit down" with the officers of the MC or have been invited as a CVMA Member, to attend a function there.

16. No Chapter Location Bars, territorial rockers, rocker patches or anything giving the appearance of a rocker (see "Rocker" in Glossary section) are to be worn with a CVMA back-patch. Additionally, no state flags or state logos, which could be interpreted as claiming territory, are to worn on the back of the vest or jacket (front and back on soft colors). Diamonds and/or any cube shaped patch that could be taken as a 1% MC (front and back) or rib/side rockers (worn on the lower front of the vest or jacket) will not be worn on the vest or jacket. It's best to check with your Regional Representative, State Representative or Chapter officers to make sure of what is and is not acceptable in your region.

17. Appreciate the fact that certain flash patches represent a negative association or evoke imagery that may be detrimental to the CVMA and our mission. The majority of mainstream society views the pentagram, KKK, Swastikas, SS Lightning bolts, Norse Runes, Nazi Eagle, the Three-Sevens, the Hammer & Sickle and Neo-Nazi symbols as being part of an extremist and/or racist organization. We are veterans, warriors and should represent ourselves as such to the general public and the motorcycle community.

18. If someone from a MC requests that you remove your vest/patch, don't argue. The best response is: "No Problem" and politely take it off and let your local CVMA Chain of Command

know which motorcycle club it was so they can deal with any potential problems. You normally will only get asked once.

19. If an establishment has a sign indicating “No Colors” the vest should be removed out of respect to the other clubs and the policy of the establishment. While we may just be an association of combat veterans, it’s only respectful to honor the house rules. An MC that honored the “house rules” would probably be deeply offended that you didn’t. Also, remember that many establishments choose to have this policy and it applies to all clubs that use any kind of patch; they do not distinguish between a MC, Association and a RC. Be aware of the local MC hangouts and its best not to wear our CVMA patch into them without an invitation.

20. Do not, under any circumstances, lie! You can decline to answer a question in a polite manner by saying something like, “That seems like association business, and I would like to refer that to one of our officers in order to get better information.” Be prepared to answer questions about what your association is about. Such as:

- “We are the CVMA and we are not an MC and have no intention of ever trying to become a MC.”
- “Our Patch is earned by being a United States Military Combat Veteran.”
- “We pay small yearly dues that are used to benefit veteran issues.”
- “All makes and models of motorcycle with a displacement of at least 500cc are welcomed in the CVMA.”
- “We are a non-territorial association and wear nothing signifying territory.”
- “We are a neutral association and do not wear any MC support patches.”
- “Women riders are welcome and are welcomed as full members if they have served in harm’s way in one of our military branches.”

Additionally:

- Do not offer telephone numbers, e-mail addresses, forum links or web sites, it’s better to refer them to your local CVMA Chain of Command.
- Do not discuss or brag about how large the local or national membership is.
- Do not volunteer association information but if you are asked a question about your chapter, answer it if you can. If they start asking questions about the number of members or the National organization, refer them to your local CVMA Chain of Command.

21. Do not touch or sit on a MC patch-holder’s bike unless invited to do so. Do not expect the invitation.

22. An MC probate and/or prospect can usually be identified by the back patch they are wearing. There are many different ways motorcycle clubs identify prospects. They can have the rockers without the main patch. They can actually have a patch saying “PROSPECT”. Some do not wear any patch, because all the specific clubs patch-holders know who they are. You want

to treat them or even someone you suspect is a probate or prospect the same way you would treat a full-patch member - with respect and courtesy.

23. Be aware of the behavior and attitude of the other CVMA members who are with you (especially if anyone has been drinking) at events. If necessary, try to take action to avoid problems before they happen. For example, if someone appears to be getting too angry, loud or possibly disrespectful, take them aside or suggest going somewhere else until things settle down. You could also let your local CVMA Chain of Command know about the situation. If an incident should occur in spite of your best efforts when no Chapter Officers are present, make sure to let them know as soon afterward possible. If no club officers happen to be there, then all of the CVMA members that are there need to make the attempt to take that person aside, and strongly suggest that the offending CVMA member go somewhere else to settle down.

24. Have absolutely no doubt that an MC is serious and many have been known to physically educate a person who shows disrespect or displays a bad attitude.

25. Be aware that problems created in one part of the country by a CVMA member or issues with the CVMA in one area have the potential to affect CVMA members in other areas and states.

26. The term Brother or Bro has special meaning to an MC patch-holder; do not call a patchholder Brother or Bro. Their Brothers are fellow patch-holders and those that have earned that term.

27. Never use the term "outlaw club" when speaking to any member of any MC.

28. Don't ever touch any part of another club member's colors, which includes the vest or jacket it's sewn on. That is considered a serious form of disrespect, which could cause them to aggressively educate the un-informed.

29. While in public places, always conduct yourself with the CVMA in mind. Remember that whatever you do, people will remember . . . good or bad.



## **Appendix A**

### **Glossary**

AMA - American Motorcycle Association.

ABATE - An organization started by EasyRider Magazine to fight against discrimination toward motorcyclists, mostly helmet laws originally. Once represented American Brotherhood Against Totalitarian Acts. Now ABATE has many other names from state to state such as American Brotherhood (or Bikers) Aimed toward Education. Now fighting rights many issues well beyond helmet laws, and often helping charities. They often have local regions, areas, and chapters, counties, to get be closer to members in a statewide group and provide local functions as well as state wide functions.

Back Patch - The official "attire" of MCs usually consisting of a sleeveless denim or leather vest with a club patch sewn on the back. See 1, 2 and 3-Piece Patch.

CoC - Confederation of Clubs stated mission is to facilitate unity within the motorcycle community. The CoC exists to bring communication through clubs, improve the motorcyclist image, support legislation for the betterment of motorcycling and allow clubs to come to a neutral spot where issues can be discussed. They monitor and protect the rights of biker in the court system. In some areas the CoC may also be a sanctioning body for new or probate clubs in that region.

Colors - Colors are the insignia worn by individuals of a specific organization to identify membership. Club patches have been worn by many different groups but have become largely synonymous with MCs. Colors are considered to represent "significant markers of the socialization" of new members to clubs, rank and present a dominant symbol of identity and marked with related symbolism. The primary symbol being of the "back-patch" which is the clubs' colors. Wearing such clothing is referred to as "flying one's colors." Note: Colors are never to be worn by either the operator or passenger of an automobile, cage or truck as it is viewed by the entire motorcycle community as a sign of disrespect.

Cut / Cuts - A denim jacket with the sleeves cut off (that's why it's called a "cut") with the club's colors sewn on the back. It may also be a leather vest or jacket.

Flash Patch - Generic patches usually sold at swap meets and shops.

Freedom Fighter - An MRO member dedicated to preserving or gaining our rights.

H.O.G. - Harley Owners Group.

Independent - Someone not affiliated with any club or group, but normally a part of the biker culture.

LEO - Law Enforcement Officer/Official.

MC - Motorcycle Club.

MM - Motorcycle Ministry.

MRO - Motorcycle Rights Organization. An organization such as ABATE, BOLT, Motorcycle Riders Foundation or American Motorcycle Association. Having as part of their agenda to protect the rights and freedoms of motorcyclists. Overseas MAG and FEMA are the biggest MRO's.

MSF - Motorcycle Safety Foundation.

NCOM - The goal and purpose of The National Coalition of Motorcyclists (NCOM) is to assist all motorcycle organizations and individual riders with legal, legislative and other motorcycling issues. The Coalition will not dictate to any organization, but will be available to assist NCOM member groups through such free services as legislative assistance, nationwide information network, public awareness programs, safety projects, loan program, and biker anti-discrimination legal and legislative assistance.

Nomad - A Nomad in an MC has authority delegated by the National President to enforce club rules and behavior. Most club members wear a territorial rocker (i.e., the bottom patch on the back of the jacket or vest) which signifies what city or state their chapter is located in. A Nomad's territorial rocker, however, will simply say "Nomad". This means that they hold no particular allegiance to a specific club chapter, but should be respected and accepted club wide. For example, if the National President had a problem with a specific club chapter, he might dispatch a group of Nomads to visit the chapter. The Nomads would then observe the chapter and advise the members of any problems the National President may have. If the infractions were not corrected, the Nomads might then have the authority to correct the problem. Since the Nomads are not official members of a specific club chapter, they must be received, housed and fed by any chapter where they may currently be located. They are essentially members of all chapters.

Out in Bad Standing - A term for a club member whose membership has been terminated by the club, usually because they breached club rules.

OMC - Outlaw Motorcycle Club was originally the term designated a motorcycle organization that was not a chartered member of the AMA. Today, the term defines any club that has a 3-piece patch. By definition, all 1% clubs are outlaw motorcycle clubs, but not all outlaw motorcycle clubs are 1% clubs.

Patch - The club colors of any MC. A patch can be the entire vest with the colors sewed on it or in can just refer to the club colors by themselves.

Patch-holder - A member of an MC who wears the distinctive club patch(s) on his jacket or vest.

RC - Riding Club.

Rags - Also used to refer to colors. In some areas it's used only when referring to a woman's colors.

Road-Name - Also known as handle. Name given to someone by his Brothers/friends. Usually given after some kind of incident or something they would associate with that person.

Rocker - A Rocker is defined as any item, including but not limited to, a patch, direct embroidery, direct printing, sublimation, heat transfer, iron-on or hand drawn rendered in the shape of an arc, either upward or downward. Part of MC colors which usually designates geographic location, territory or MC position/rank.

SMRO - State Motorcycle Rights Organization. Same as a MRO except defined by the state they operate in that respective state. Such as ABATE of Ohio, ABATE of MN, BOLT of CA, ABATE of CA, TMRO, ABATE of PA. Most often associated with National MROs such as AMA and MRF. However working on a state level, with state government to protect motorcyclist's rights and freedoms. Many meet at MRF and AMA functions to discuss issues, strategies, and other helpful information.

Soft-Colors - A T-Shirt, Sweat Shirt or any article of clothing with the club's colors or logo printed on the back. Keep in mind that if you're wearing CVMA patch designs, images or logos you are representing the CVMA.

Turn Your Back - To completely disassociate from a person or club.

US Defenders - The US Defenders are composed of members from every state CoC and their COIR representatives. The US Defenders program is not a Motorcycle Rights Organization (MRO) but manageable units of MCs and Independent Riders manpower. They stand ready to implement and support motorcycle rights organizations and other organization's "Call-to-Actions" that are identified as falling within each Confederation of Club's agenda.

XXF-FXX / XXFOREVER - FOREVERXX - Patch worn by MC members to represent their total commitment to the club and every other member of that club. (XX stands for the name of the club).

1%er - As the "legend" goes, the term 1% comes from the annual AMA Gypsy Tour event and races on July 4, 1947, in Hollister, California. Members of the Boozefighters MC and POBOBs (Pissed Off Bastards of Bloomington) made the headlines with an extremely sensationalized story in *Life* magazine. The AMA wrote an article in their magazine shortly after the episode

denouncing these bikers stating "99% of all of our members are law-abiding, god fearing and family oriented citizens and only 1% were anti-social barbarians, the rough element and outlaws." Thus the terms "1%er" and "outlaw biker" was born. Some of the early bikers embraced the term and decided to call themselves 1%er's and display it on a cube or diamond shaped patch.

"13" - The number thirteen is a common patch worn by MC bikers and can have several meanings. The most common held meaning is its being the 13th letter of the alphabet "M" and stands for Marijuana or Meth. It's also known to stand for the original or "Mother" chapter of an MC. In the last few years, many places are saying the "M" stands for Motorcycle.

1-Piece Patch - A one-piece patch, normally a custom patch comprised of an emblem, traditionally worn on the back of a vest, represents a family club, riding club, or social motorcycle club. One piece back patches are generally accepted and approved, unless the patch displays stolen logos or those that are similar to the local MC.

2-Piece Patch - A two-piece patch can have many different meanings but usually signifies a club in some sort of transition. It can mean that the members are awaiting approval from the area's dominant club to become a sanctioned MC and earn the right to wear a three-piece patch.

3-Piece Patch - A three-piece patch normally signifies that the group is a traditional 1% club. They are worn with the top rocker showing the club name, the middle showing the club's official insignia or colors and the bottom rocker showing their territory or their geographical location. Additionally, a small MC patch is normally located to the side of the main patch. There are also a few 3-piece patch clubs where the bottom rocker has something other than territory, such as a saying. The traditional MC is one that adheres to the protocols and traditions that have long been established. There are a few exceptions including veterans, firefighters, and Christian groups. To keep it simple, a three-piece patch should only be worn by established MC's. A three-piece patch is a public sign of commitment to a particular MC's protocols and lifestyle, and therefore, MC's take them very seriously! Wearing colors that resemble a 3-piece patch without permission from the dominate MC could turn out incredibly bad.

## **Appendix B**

### **Publication Changes**

# **Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association (CVMA)**

## **National Protocol**

**Revision: B**

**Effective Date: February 29, 2012**

**Change Number: 1**

**Effective Date: May 5, 2012**

### **Page 6, Paragraph 16 is changed as follows:**

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The word “not” was added to the third sentence for clarification and to indicate that the wearing of diamond and/or any cube shaped patch will not be worn on a member’s vest or jacket.