

WHY DO POLICE STOP PEOPLE?

University Police fully realize that being stopped by the police can be a stressful situation for the motorist, it is also important to recognize that it can also be a stressful situation for the officer. If you are stopped by the police while driving, you may feel confused, anxious, or even angry. These are natural feelings; you may not be aware of why you are being stopped and what actions you should or should not take during the stop. As for the officer, while approaching the motorist's vehicle there are many factors that can be stressful as well. Situations that have the potential for dangerous occurrences such as being struck by another vehicle. Each year a number of police officers are killed or seriously injured during traffic stops.

With this in mind, there are things that you, as a law abiding citizen, can do to help lessen the unpleasantness of the experience.

REMEMBER:

In all cases, a citizen is required to cooperate with police.



When Stopped by the police, remember:

1. A police officer may pull you over at any time for a traffic offense or police investigation.
2. When you see the red overhead lights and/or hear the siren, remain calm and safely pull over parallel to the right side of the road.
3. Remain in your vehicle unless the officer advises otherwise.
4. Keep your hands on the steering wheel so the officer can see them.
5. Avoid any sudden movements, especially toward the floorboard, rear seat or passenger side of the vehicle.
6. Do not immediately reach for your license or other documents until the officer requests them. NYS Law requires drivers to show their license, registration and insurance card upon request.
7. If your documents are out of reach, tell the officer where they are before you reach for them.
8. If the stop occurs during darkness, put on your dome or interior lights so the officer can easily see that all is in order.
9. If there are passengers in your vehicle, encourage them to remain quiet and cooperate with instructions. You, as the operator are solely responsible for your vehicle and its occupants.
10. The officer may issue you a ticket. If you feel the reason is vague or unclear, ask the officer for details.
11. Avoid becoming argumentative. Arguing will not change the officer's mind. If you contest the violation, you will have an opportunity to address the matter in court.
12. Be honest with the officer. If you really did not see the stop sign, or were unaware of the speed limit, let the officer know. Being honest about any situation never hurts.
13. Most departments use one-officer patrol cars. It would be normal to see two or three marked units on a traffic stop.
14. Finally, if you receive a ticket, accept it calmly. Accepting it is not an admission of guilt.

Traffic enforcement is conducted for the purpose of terminating violations of the NYS Vehicle and Traffic Law. Violations are often the cause of vehicle accidents, which may result in death, personal injury, property damage and can result in significant financial loss. 94% of all traffic accidents are 100% preventable.

Each situation is unique and the police officer must alter his/her response to fit the circumstance.

GENERALLY, A Police Officer:

- May approach either side of the vehicle and will provide his or her name upon request. Remember to lower your window so you can communicate with the officer.
- A police officer who is not in uniform will present proper identification; you may request to examine their credentials so that you are satisfied they are a law enforcement officer.
- Will inform a person of the reason for being stopped.
- Will only use the force necessary to affect the arrest of a suspect and to maintain the custody of the prisoner.
- Will not search the body of a person of the opposite sex except to prevent the disposal or destruction of evidence, and
- Will only arrest a person for a crime committed in the officer's presence, or when the officer has probable cause to believe the person has already committed the crime.

QUESTIONS/COMPLIMENTS/COMPLAINTS

If you have a question about procedures or a complaint about your treatment, contact the Department and ask to speak with a supervisor. You may also send a letter of compliment if you feel the officer was particularly helpful in your situation.

This information is provided to you by the NYS University Police Department.

We hope this information will be helpful in answering questions about traffic stop procedures and in reducing the stress when stopped by the police.

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Protecting New York's Future

The New York State University Police Department is the agency responsible for law enforcement and public safety on campus. In partnership with the SUNY Alfred community, we are committed to providing a safe and secure educational environment.

WHAT TO DO WHEN STOPPED BY THE POLICE



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