

WHY DO POLICE STOP PEOPLE?

There are many different reasons why you might be stopped by the police.

- ▶ You may have committed a traffic violation.
- ▶ Your vehicle may have equipment or registration violations.
- ▶ Your vehicle may fit the description of a “wanted” vehicle.
- ▶ The officer might think that you are in trouble and need help.

Whatever the reason, the officer needs your cooperation.



Three suggestions are offered in an attempt to minimize the time needed while being detained during a traffic stop:

Carry Proper Identification

When driving a motor vehicle, you must be a valid operator who has been issued a license or permit. We highly recommend that you have this license in your possession when you drive.

Carry Proof of Insurance

State law requires that proof of current insurance must be presented to police during a traffic stop or vehicle accident when requested.

Driver Responsibilities

You are responsible for the condition, contents and occupants of your vehicle. Remember that Missouri State statute requires that all drivers shall yield the right-of-way, move their vehicle as far to the right as possible and stop.

THE TRAFFIC STOP

If you are stopped by the police while driving, you may feel confused, anxious or even angry. These are natural feelings, but remember, traffic stops can also be stressful and dangerous for the police officer. Each year, a significant number of law enforcement officers are killed or seriously injured while making the “routine traffic stop.” This also explains why it is normal for another police vehicle to stop to assist. With this in mind, there are things that you, as a law-abiding citizen, can do to help alleviate any uneasiness that might be associated with the experience.



WHEN STOPPED BY A POLICE OFFICER, REMEMBER -

- ◆ A police officer may pull your vehicle over at any time for a traffic offense or police investigation.
- ◆ When you see the red overhead lights and/or hear the siren, remain calm and safely pull over to the right side of the road and stop.
- ◆ Police officers are trained to ask for identification. Providing your documentation will simplify and speed the process. Remember, the officer is in uniform with a name tag displayed. You have the advantage of knowing with whom you are dealing. Extend the same courtesy by providing the requested identification.
- ◆ Remain in your vehicle unless the officer advises otherwise.
- ◆ Keep your hands on the steering wheel so the officer can see them.

- ◆ Avoid any sudden movements, especially toward the floorboard, rear seat or passenger side of the vehicle.
- ◆ Do not immediately reach for your license or other documents until the officer requests them.
- ◆ If you have a concealed weapon in the car in conformance with state law, inform the officer of its location.
- ◆ If the stop occurs during darkness, turn on your dome or interior lights so the officer can easily see that all is in order.
- ◆ Bright spotlights are used for the safety of all persons involved. They are not meant to intimidate or embarrass anyone.
- ◆ If the officer suspects you may be under the influence of alcohol, you may be asked to perform field sobriety tests.
- ◆ If there are passengers in your vehicle, encourage them to remain quiet and cooperate with instructions. You, as the operator, are responsible for your vehicle and its occupants.
- ◆ The officer may issue you a ticket. If you feel the reason is vague or unclear, ask the officer for details.
- ◆ If you do not agree with the citation or the officer’s demeanor, do not argue at the scene. All citizens have the right to question their citation before a judge. Each police department has an internal affairs system in place to investigate citizen complaints, including complaints related to traffic stops.
- ◆ Traffic stops are a very important law enforcement function, providing an effective tool to maintain the safety of our roads, while assisting in the identification and apprehension of criminals.