

## What Do I Do When Stopped by Police While Driving?

- **When you notice the emergency lights on, pull your vehicle over to the right shoulder as soon as it is safe.**
  - You should pull over as quickly as possible even if you do not know why you are being stopped.
  - There could be a mechanical problem with your car you are unaware of or you may have committed a traffic violation without realizing it. **Stay in your vehicle while the officer approaches.**
  - Exiting your vehicle does not assist the officer and may be perceived as a threat.
- **Turn on your interior light if stopped at night.**
  - This helps the officer determine if there are any weapons or other threats inside the vehicle.
- **Keep your hands in an area where they can be seen easily, preferable on the steering wheel.**
  - Reaching under the seat or into the glove box or keeping your hands out of site will cause the officer concern that you may have a weapon.
- **Give your driver's license and any other information the officer asks for when asked.**
  - Some officers may not explain the reason they have stopped you until you have provided the identification. This is to avoid a debate over the reason of the stop before getting needed information.
- **If you wish to inquire as to why you were stopped or offer an explanation, do so before the officer returns to their squad.**
  - Answer all questions honestly. Information about prior arrests or traffic violations is easily verified during normal record checks done on stops.
  - If you are asked to stop out of the vehicle, do so without any sudden or threatening movements.
  - Touching or threatening a police officer or acting in a disorderly manner can result in the filing of additional charges and you will be arrested.
  - If a citation is issued, it is best not to argue about it on the side of the road. If you feel you did not commit the violation, your best option is to appear in court on the date indicated on the citation.

Whether an officer issues you a ticket or gives you a warning, it is entirely up to the officer's discretion. Your conduct during the stop may influence the officer's decision. There have been times when people have left an encounter with a police officer feeling frustrated. Most of the time this is because the party that was stopped did not understand why they were stopped or felt they did not commit the violation. There are times when an officer may not be able to give a full explanation of why they do things when they stop someone. Hopefully, the information given here will help in answering some of the questions you may have of police procedures.