

WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE STOPPED BY A POLICE OFFICER



LOUISVILLE METRO POLICE DEPARTMENT
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OVERVIEW

The Louisville Metro Police Department would like to offer some important tips and suggestions to help when interacting with the police.

This information will make the experience less stressful and will help to ensure your safety, the safety of others and the safety of the officer.

Please remember that the first words spoken by either the officer(s) or the citizen(s) involved may very well determine the tone of the encounter and even the eventual outcome.

PLEASE REMEMBER...

If approached by a police officer:

- **Speak with the officer as you would a friend and not an enemy.**

If you are stopped, questioned or detained by a police officer:

- **Approach him or her with the same level of respect that you would expect from them.**

If you feel the officer is being rude or taking actions that are not appropriate:

- **Cooperate with their lawful orders and follow up with a call to their immediate supervisor or the Professional Standards Unit.**

PLEASE REMEMBER...

Maintain your composure and do not take actions that will escalate the situation.

The side of the road is not the place to argue the validity of a citation or warning, which should be done either in court or through a follow-up call to the police department.

Officers have a tough and dangerous job and are trained to place a great deal of emphasis on their safety and survival.

WHAT TO DO IF STOPPED IN YOUR VEHICLE

- Simply slow down and signal your intention to safely pull to the right of the roadway when a police car approaches displaying emergency lights.
- If you feel unsafe, turn on your emergency flashers and proceed to a well-lit, populated area.
- ***Sit calmly with your hands visible on the steering wheel.***
- If you have a passenger, ask them to sit quietly with their hands visible.
- If stopped at night, turn on your dome light and show the officer that nothing is wrong.
- The officer may shine a light into your vehicle; this is not considered a search.
- If the officer is not in uniform, you may ask that a uniformed officer come to the location so that you feel safe.

WHAT TO DO IF STOPPED IN YOUR VEHICLE

- Avoid making sudden movements as these actions could alarm the officer.
- Do not get out of your vehicle unless the officer asks you to step out. ***If you are asked to do so, comply in a calm manner with your hands in plain view of the officer.***
- Communicate your actions in advance by telling the officer what you will be doing before you do so.
- If requested, you must give the officer your driver's license, vehicle registration and proof of insurance card in compliance with State Law. ***Tell the officer the location of these documents before reaching for them and ask permission to retrieve them.***
- Once you have given the officer these documents, that is the time to ask why you were stopped. Officers should inform you of the reason.

WHAT TO DO IF STOPPED IN YOUR VEHICLE

- The officer will often complete the contact without requiring you to leave your car however, sometimes it may be necessary for the officer to ask you to take a seat in the patrol car. Court cases permit the officer to decide which procedure is the safest.
- If an officer has probable cause, your car can be searched without a court issued warrant.
- If you are the driver and you are asked by the officer for permission to search your vehicle, understand that you can refuse but do so in a polite manner.
- However, if the officer has probable cause, he or she does not need your consent to search the vehicle. Probable cause can be achieved by the officer's senses: example – officer smells marijuana or sees contraband in plain view.

WHAT TO DO IF STOPPED IN YOUR VEHICLE

- If you believe that the officer's actions are improper, ask for a supervisor to respond.
- If you are issued a traffic citation and you have questions concerning it:
 - Maintain a polite, cooperative attitude and ask the officer when a copy is given to you.
 - Or, inquire at your court hearing.
- A traffic citation issued by one officer cannot be changed by another officer.
- Do not attempt to debate the traffic citation on the side of the roadway. The court is the proper place to contest any grievance.
- Just because the officer gives you a citation does not automatically mean you are guilty or that you have to pay a fine. You have the right to go to court and to have the judge hear your explanation.

WHAT TO DO IF STOPPED IN YOUR VEHICLE

- Officers are often asked why it takes so many officers to make a traffic stop, this is for officer safety.
- We encourage officers to back each other up when they are on a traffic stop especially if there is more than one occupant in the vehicle.
- Please remember that traffic laws are enacted to ensure the safety of the motoring public. Help make the roadways safe and please obey the traffic laws.

WHAT TO DO IF STOPPED ON THE STREET

- Officers are often dispatched on runs to certain locations to investigate a call.
- Officers must investigate and report back their findings. This is why officers may ask you questions even though you have not done anything. They may be looking for potential witnesses to assist in an investigation.
- Questions are not necessarily an accusation. Please answer all questions and follow the officer's instructions.
- Your answers should be factual to the best of your knowledge.
- ***Keep your hands visible and out of your pockets.***
- Do not bad mouth police officers or walk away.
- Do not run as it may make you appear guilty of something and you could fall and injure yourself.

WHAT TO DO IF STOPPED ON THE STREET

- Keep a photo identification card on your person whenever possible. This will ensure that the officer will be able to easily identify you and will also help in an accident or injury situation when we need to notify your family members.
- It is a crime to lie to a police officer about your identity once they give notice that lying to them about your identity is a crime.
- If an officer has reasonable suspicion that you are armed and his/her or that others are in danger, you may be subjected to a pat down search. A pat down is just that – a pat down of outer clothing. The officer should not go into your pockets unless he/she feel an object that may be a weapon or knows to be drugs.
- Please be patient, it takes time for officers to conduct a check for warrants especially if you do not have proper identification.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU BELIEVE YOU WERE NOT TREATED CORRECTLY

- If you believe that the officer has mistreated you, mishandled you or treated you rudely, then you should make a complaint with the officer's supervisor or file a formal complaint with the Professional Standards Unit.
- Only the amount of force necessary to affect an arrest should be used by the officer.
- If arrested, do not resist; comply with the officer's commands. It is unlawful to resist arrest even if the arrest is invalid.
- If you are arrested, you will be searched. This means that officers will go into all of your pockets and search your entire person.
- Do not ask for an officer's badge number. Ask for the officer's name and code number. Officers are required to give you this information. The officer's code number is a four digit number.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU BELIEVE YOU WERE NOT TREATED CORRECTLY

- If you are involved in an incident and the officer does not provide you with his or her name and code number, than all you need to know is the date, time and location of the incident. We should then be able to retrieve the information.
- If you observe an officer do something on the street that does not appear appropriate but it does involve you, do not interfere with the incident. When everything has calmed down, ask politely for the officer's name and code number. If he or she does not provide this information, walk away and document the date, time and location of the incident.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU BELIEVE YOU WERE NOT TREATED CORRECTLY

- Complaints should be made about the officer's behavior not about the merits of the case.
- You cannot make a complaint because the officer gave you a speeding ticket and you don't think you were speeding. That is a matter for the court to decide.
- To make a complaint:
 - Call and request to speak to the officer's supervisor or go by the nearest police division.
- To make a formal complaint:
 - Call the Professional Standards Unit at 502-574-7144.

CONCLUSION

We want everyone to walk away from an encounter with a police officer feeling valued. You may not be happy with the outcome of a stop but you should feel you were treated with respect during the encounter. We believe our officers should walk away with the same feeling.