

SUNY NEW PALTZ
**UNIVERSITY POLICE
DEPARTMENT**



**You see flashing
red lights in your
rear view mirror...**
Now what?



New Paltz
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

What To Do When Stopped

A police officer may pull you over at anytime for a traffic offense or police investigation. If that happens to you here are some important things to keep in mind...

1. 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.
2. **Remain in your vehicle** unless the officer advises otherwise.
3. **Keep your hands on the steering wheel** so the officer can see them. Hands that are not clearly visible can indicate danger to an officer.
4. **Avoid any sudden movements**, especially toward the floor-board, rear seat or passenger side of the vehicle. Those actions may be interpreted as reaching for weapons.
5. **Do not immediately reach for your license or other documents until the officer requests them.** New York State Law requires drivers to show their license, registration, and proof of vehicle insurance upon request.
6. **If your documents are out of reach**, tell the officer where they are before you reach for them.
7. If the stop occurs **after dark**, **put on your dome or interior lights** so the officer can see that all is in order with no hidden threats.
8. **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.
9. The officer may issue you a summons. **If you feel the reason is vague or unclear, ask the officer for details.**
10. **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.
11. Many departments use **one-officer patrol cars**, especially in the suburbs. Do not be alarmed if you see more than one patrol car for a traffic stop.
12. Finally, if you receive a summons, take receipt of it calmly. **Accepting a summons is not an admission of guilt.**

Remember: In all cases when stopped, a person is required to cooperate with police instructions.

Did You Know:

New York State Vehicle and Traffic Law requires all drivers shall yield the right of way to emergency vehicles. Drivers are to immediately pull over parallel to the right edge, stop, and remain in a stopped position until the emergency vehicle has passed.

Reasons You Might Be Pulled Over

Whatever the reason, the officer needs your cooperation.

- You may have committed a traffic violation.
- You may fit the description of a suspect.
- The officer might think you are in trouble and need help.
- You may have witnessed a crime.

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 number of law enforcement officers are killed or seriously injured while making a “routine” traffic stop. Police officers are especially vulnerable during hours of darkness.

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

Each Situation Is Unique

Officers must tailor their responses to fit the circumstances.

A police officer will...

- **Provide their name and badge number** upon request.
- **Present proper identification if not in uniform.** You may request to examine their credentials so you are satisfied they are a law enforcement officer. You may also request that a uniformed officer with a marked patrol car respond if you are not comfortable with the situation.
- Inform a person of **the reason for being stopped.**
- **Use only the force necessary** to effect an arrest of a suspect and to maintain the custody of the prisoner.
- **Not search the body of a person of the opposite sex** except to prevent injury to the officer or another person, or to prevent the destruction or disposal of evidence.
- **Only arrest a person for an offense committed in the officer's presence,** or when the officer has probable cause to believe the person has already committed the crime.

PROTECTING NEW YORK'S FUTURE

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