



## **POLICE TRAFFIC STOPS**

### ***Know Your Rights and Responsibilities When Stopped by Police***

#### **WHY DO POLICE OFFICERS STOP PEOPLE?**

There are many different reasons why a police officer might stop you.

- The officer may want to warn you about a potentially dangerous situation.
- You may have committed a traffic violation.
- The vehicle you are driving may have an equipment violation.
- The vehicle you are driving may match the description of a vehicle used in a criminal act.

**Whatever the reason is for the stop, the officer needs your cooperation.**

Remember that the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Code requires that all drivers yield the right-of-way to police and other emergency vehicles. If a police officer is pulling you over, move your vehicle as far to the right as possible and stop. If it is not safe to stop on the roadway, pull off of the roadway into a parking lot.

If you are stopped by a police officer, you may feel confused, anxious, or even angry. These are natural feelings, but remember, traffic stops can also be stressful and dangerous for police officers. Quite often a second police officer may also assist with a traffic stop; this is for the protection of the officers, not because you are a "criminal." Each year a significant number of law enforcement officers are killed or seriously injured while making "routine traffic stops."

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

***When stopped by a police officer, remember:***

- Police Officers are trained to ask for identification.
- Providing your documentation will simplify and speed up the process.
  
- Remain in your vehicle unless the officer advises otherwise.
  
- Keep your hands on the steering wheel so the officer can see them.
  
- If the stop occurs during darkness, please turn on your dome light so that the officer can see that all is in order.
  
- Avoid any sudden movements, especially toward the floorboard, rear seat or passenger side of the vehicle, or glovebox.
  
- Bright spotlights are used for the safety of all persons involved. They are not meant to intimidate or embarrass you.
  
- Comply with the officer's request to see you driver's license, proof of insurance and vehicle registration. The New Jersey Motor Vehicle Code requires you to display these items at the request of a police officer.
  
- If your documents are out of reach, tell the officer where they are before you reach for them.
  
- The officer may issue a ticket. If you feel the reason is unclear, ask for clarification.
  
- If you do not agree with the citation, please do not argue at the scene. You have a right to contest the citation in court.

Traffic stops are a very important law enforcement function, which maintains safety throughout our community.

Please understand that each situation is unique and that a police officer must alter his or her response to fit the circumstance. Generally, however, a police officer:

- Will provide his/her name and badge number upon request.
- Will inform the driver of the vehicle of the reason for being stopped.

***All of the traffic stops that our agency makes are video and audio recorded for your safety and ours.***



**WE CARE ABOUT YOUR SAFETY!**

Please use the following guidelines when you drive:

- Always insure you and all occupants are properly buckled up.
- Don't drink and drive. Nearly half of all fatal crashes are alcohol related. If you drink, use a designated driver.
- Observe and obey posted speed limits. Speeding fines are expensive and may cause your insurance rates to increase.
- Impatient and aggressive drivers are becoming increasingly common on our roadways. Drive with respect and courtesy. Aggressive driving is against the law!
- Always avoid distractions while driving; using cell phones, eating, drinking, applying make-up, reading, etc.



**Courtesy of  
The Elmwood Park Police Department**

**Dedicated to Community Policing and  
Community Relations.**

**Please partner with us to help serve you better.**

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***Please visit our website:***

***ElmwoodParkPD.org***