

# When a Police Officer Pulls You Over, What Do You Do?

You look into your rear view mirror and see a patrol car behind you with his emergency lights flashing. If you are like most people, this can be a stressful experience.

Knowing what to do, and what not to do, will make the experience less stressful and will help insure your safety, the safety of other motorists, and the safety of the officer. This column is designed to inform you of what to do when stopped by an officer.

## Actions You Should Take

Kentucky Law requires a motorist to pull as far as possible to the right of the graveled portion of the highway and stop when a police car approaches displaying emergency equipment. The motorist must remain stopped until the car has passed, or a police officer directs you otherwise.

When you see flashing blue lights on a patrol car, don't panic. Simply slow down, signal your intention to turn onto the right shoulder, and drive off the roadway to the right as far as you can safely do so.

**It is important that neither you nor your passengers make any sudden or undirected movements.** The officer does not know who you are or your intentions.

If you are stopped at night, turn on your dome light and show the officer that nothing is wrong. Having your light on and keeping your hands on the steering wheel will usually put the officer's mind at ease.

## Actions The Officer Will Take

After an explanation as to why you were stopped, the officer may ask for your driver's license, vehicle registration, and proof of insurance. While the officer is approaching your vehicle do not attempt to reach under your seat, in the glove compartment, in a console, or any other place hidden from the officer's view.

The officer will often complete the contact without requiring you to leave your car. Sometimes it may be necessary for the officer to ask you to take a seat in the rear of the patrol car. Court cases permit the officer to decide which procedure is safest for the officer. This is unusual for any officer in Independence, KY. We typically have the driver remain in their vehicle during the routine traffic stop. As you exit your car, **always keep your hands in plain view of the officer.**

If the officer issues a traffic ticket, please maintain a polite and cooperative attitude. Do not attempt to debate the merits of the traffic ticket on the side of the highway. The court is the proper place to contest any grievance.

Just because the officer gives you a ticket 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.

### **For Your Information**

Once the officer gives you a copy of the traffic ticket, you have been served a summons (subpoena) to appear in court. Failure to appear on your scheduled court date is a violation of the law and may result in additional charges being filed against you. The judge has the right to send a letter to the Transportation Cabinet requesting to have your driving privileges revoked or suspended for an indefinite period of time.

In nearly all court cases, when a fine is levied, court cost must be paid. Even if you pay the traffic violation fine by mail, the court case must still be processed through the court system. Therefore, the court cost must be paid. Court costs help fund the court system. The Independence Police Department does not receive any funds from the court system.

Officers may provide you with an information sheet explaining the courts mail-in procedures. The officers do not collect fines.

### **Special Note**

If you are alone and uncertain if the police officer trying to stop you is legitimate, pull over but keep your car doors locked. When the officer approaches your vehicle, roll your window down only far enough to talk to the officer. Express your concern and desire to drive to the nearest public place. Most officers will understand. Once there, remain in your secured vehicle until proper identification of the officer is made.

### **Conclusion**

Traffic laws are enacted to ensure the safety of the motoring public. **Help make Kentucky Highways safe, please obey our traffic laws.**

If you are issued a traffic ticket and you have a question concerning it, please feel free to ask the officer when a copy is given to you. You may also call the county prosecuting attorney. Another cannot change a traffic ticket issued by one officer.

### **Remember:**

1. If the police have stopped you, they believe they have a legal reason to do so.
2. It is best to be calm and identify yourself.
3. By yelling or threatening the police officer, the best you can do is getting yourself arrested. Please do not make the situation worse for you than it already is.