

## WHEN A POLICE OFFICER COMES TO YOUR DOOR

Whenever police officers come to your door, they should willingly identify themselves and state their purpose for being there. Usually it is for one of the following reasons:

- To interview you or a member of your household concerning an incident that is being investigated.
- To respond to a call for service.
- To make a notification.
- To serve an arrest warrant.
- To serve a search and seizure warrant.

An arrest warrant commands the officer to arrest the person named in the warrant. You may see a copy of the arrest warrant. However, the officer may not have the original in his possession. Arrest warrants are centrally filed.

A search warrant can be served anytime day or night. Police officers with a search warrant will knock and announce their presence unless emergency circumstances exist. A search warrant can be served and the property searched without the owner present. A list of seized property will be provided.



## WHY WOULD A POLICE OFFICER QUESTION ME?

The officer may need to clarify a situation or investigate a matter that threatens public safety. The best way to do this is to ask questions. Questions are not necessarily an accusation. Cooperative responses can alleviate potential conflict.

## IF YOU THINK YOU WERE NOT TREATED CORRECTLY

The Winston-Salem Police Department does not condone police misconduct of any type. Hopefully, the information presented here will give you an understanding of police procedures and let you know what to expect from a police officer if you are stopped.

If you are frustrated or dissatisfied with your interaction with a police officer, or feel that you are not being treated fairly, politely ask the officer questions to clarify the situation, but do not argue the issue.

You have the right to ask to speak to a supervisor. If the incident is over and the the police officer has left, you can call or come to the Public Safety Center to speak to a supervisor. You also can file a citizen's complaint with Professional Standards Division at 773-7765

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Winston-Salem Police Department Crime Prevention Unit  
725 N. Cherry St., Winston-Salem, NC 27101  
Phone: (336) 773-7835 Fax: (336) 773-7995  
E mail: [crimepreventionunit@wspd.org](mailto:crimepreventionunit@wspd.org) Web site: [www.wspd.org](http://www.wspd.org)

CITY OF WINSTON-SALEM  
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## CRIME PREVENTION TIPS from the Winston-Salem Police Department



## IF YOU ARE STOPPED BY A POLICE OFFICER

Most citizens realize that law enforcement is a difficult and dangerous profession. Every year in the United States, more than a hundred police officers are killed in the line of duty, dozens of them by gunfire. For this reason, police officers place a great deal of emphasis on officer safety and survival. Certain safety practices are instilled in police officers from the first day of their careers.

Although these procedures maximize officer safety, they may seem standoffish, impolite, or offensive to law-abiding citizens who may not consider such precautions necessary. Although a citizen may have no intention of doing harm, police officers usually maintain a defensive posture until they feel there is no risk of confrontation or injury.

Following the tips in this brochure will ensure that your encounter with a police officer is routine.

# IF YOU ARE STOPPED BY A POLICE OFFICER

## WHY WOULD A POLICE OFFICER STOP ME?

Innocent individuals may be offended or angered, or both, because an officer has stopped them. Although the delay might be inconvenient, the officer usually has a good reason.

- You might be walking in the vicinity of a recent crime.
- Your clothing may be similar or identical to that worn by someone suspected of a crime, or you may match the description of a person suspected of a crime.
- The officer may be looking for potential witnesses to assist in an investigation.
- The officer may think you need assistance
- Someone may have called the police complaining that you look suspicious.
- You might be acting in a manner that the officer considers suspicious.

Likewise, there are various reasons why a police officer might stop you while you are driving.

- The officer may want to warn you about a potentially dangerous situation.
- 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.
- You may have committed a traffic violation.



## WHAT TO DO IF A POLICE OFFICER STOPS YOU ON THE STREET

The police officer does not wish to detain you any longer than necessary. Fortright responses usually will quickly resolve the situation. If the officer hasn't told you why you have been stopped, you may inquire. Remember:

- Be courteous.
- Follow all reasonable instructions by the officer.
- Keep your hands visible to the officer.
- Don't run. It makes you look guilty of something and you could fall and injure yourself.
- Don't lie. You may be charged with a crime.
- Don't get in the way if an officer is taking someone you are with into custody. You could be arrested for interfering.

## WHAT TO DO IF A POLICE OFFICER STOPS YOU IN YOUR CAR

As far as police officers are concerned, there is no such thing as a "routine" traffic stop. Every stop has the potential for danger. Following these guidelines will help put the officer at ease:

- Safely pull over to a place out of the flow of traffic as soon as the police officer activates the emergency lights. If there does not appear to be a safe place to pull over immediately, signal your intention to pull over and proceed slowly to a safe or well-lit area.
- Remain in your vehicle. Exiting your vehicle does not assist the officer and may be perceived as a threat.
- Stay calm and keep your hands visible on the steering wheel.
- If you have passengers ask them to sit quietly with their hands visible.
- Avoid sudden movements or ducking in the seat: these actions can unnecessarily alarm the officer.
- If it is dark, turn on your inside light when you pull the car over. This will reduce the officer's concern about possible threats from within the vehicle.



- Communicate your actions in advance by telling the officer what you will be doing before you move.
- If requested, you must give the officer your driver's license, vehicle registration, and proof of insurance. If these documents are out of reach, tell the officer where they are before you reach for them.
- If the officer asks you to step out of your vehicle, comply in a calm manner. Give the officer approximately 2 to 3 feet of "personal" space as a safety zone to do his or her job.

If you are issued a citation, you will be asked to sign it. Signing is not an admission of guilt, but an acknowledgment that you have received the citation. Guilt or innocence can only be determined in court. Arguments and protests about the situation cannot be resolved in the street.

You will be given a court date and the court room location. If a fine applies you will be notified of the fine amount and how to pay the fine.