



## WHAT TO DO AND EXPECT WHEN PULLED OVER BY POLICE

The New York State Association of Chiefs of Police (NYSACOP) represents Police Chiefs and other law enforcement personnel from police departments throughout the State. NYSACOP and its members constantly strive to educate and inform the public about law enforcement issues, how such issues may affect the public and what and/or how citizens can assist law enforcement to ensure positive and productive outcomes for all involved.

One such issue is the public's encounter with law enforcement as a result of a traffic stop. Overall, traffic enforcement is conducted for the purpose of terminating violations of the New York State Vehicle and Traffic Law. Traffic violations are often the cause of vehicle crashes which may result in death, personal injury, property damage and also often results in significant financial loss. Additionally, since ninety-four percent of all traffic crashes are one-hundred percent preventable, it is imperative that law enforcement continue to be vigilant for risk takers on New York's roadways. Achieving voluntary compliance of vehicle and traffic laws is the ultimate goal.

While NYSACOP fully realizes that being stopped by the police can be a stressful situation for a motorist, it is also important to recognize that it can also be a stressful situation for the officer. Some reasons for the motorist's stress may be that they may not be aware of why they are being stopped and what actions they should, or should not, take during the stop. As for the officer, while approaching the motorist's vehicle there are many factors that can be stressful as well as situations that have the potential for dangerous occurrences such as being struck by another vehicle.

In an attempt to improve this scenario, NYSACOP is circulating the attached informational flyer to educate and inform the public on what to do and expect when pulled over by police. This flyer was developed by a collaborative effort of the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators (AAMVA), the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) and the National Association of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE). Please take the time to review it as it is our sincere hope that the information is helpful if you should be pulled over by the police.

Upon reviewing the flyer, you will see a segment stating that an officer may ask you to sign a traffic ticket. While some states do ask a motorist to do so, this procedure is not done in New York State and as such if you are issued a ticket you will not be asked to sign it.

NYSACOP and its members believe that communicating with the public enhances community relations and provides valuable information relating to the duties and responsibilities of law enforcement. We thank you for reviewing this information and for your commitment to traffic safety. Working together, we can keep our roadways safe.

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### What to Do and Expect When Pulled Over by Police (Revised January 2021)

Police officers are responsible for conducting traffic stops when they have reasonable suspicion of a traffic violation or a criminal violation. Being stopped by an officer can be a stressful experience for the driver, any passengers, and for the officer, too. Knowing what to do during the stop will help ensure your safety and the safety of others.

When you see emergency lights behind you, it is important for you and your passengers to stay calm and cooperate.

Remember to:

- Activate your turn signal and pull off or to the side of the roadway as soon as it is safe to do so.
- Turn off the engine and any audio devices.
- Stay in your vehicle unless directed by the officer to exit.
- Turn on your interior lights if you are pulled over at night to assist with visibility. Officers may use a spotlight for additional visibility.
- Keep your hands on the steering wheel or in a visible location so they are easily observable.
- Follow all instructions the officer gives you or your passengers.

The officer may approach either side of the vehicle. When the officer approaches the vehicle, remember to:

- Lower the corresponding window so you and the officer can better communicate.
- Let the officer know if you have a weapon in the vehicle upon first contact.
- Wait for the officer's instructions before reaching for your driver's license or vehicle documents.

When conducting the stop, the officer will typically:

- Show their law enforcement credentials if they are not in uniform. If they do not show their credentials, you may ask to see them.
- Explain why you were stopped/ask questions about your trip.
- Ask for your driver's license, proof of insurance, and vehicle registration. If the documents are out of your reach, tell the officer where they are and wait for the officer's acknowledgement before reaching to retrieve the documents.

In some cases, the officer may:

- Ask you to exit the vehicle. In this case, keep your hands visible, exit the vehicle, and stand in a location as directed by the officer.
- Impose a sanction such a warning, traffic ticket which may include a fine, or arrest. The officer will typically explain whatever action is being taken. If they do not, you may ask them to do so.

If you have questions, respectfully ask the officer to clarify. If you disagree with the officer's decision or course of action, do not prolong the contact by arguing with the officer. Rather, you may seek to contest the decision in court through established legal channels. **Your acceptance and signature on a traffic ticket is not an admission of guilt.** However, the **refusal to sign a traffic ticket may result in your arrest.**

If you believe the officer acted inappropriately or have questions regarding their conduct you may request to speak to a supervisor. This is best done as soon as possible after the stop.

Following these procedures can help make a traffic stop a safe experience for all parties involved.

*This guidance was approved by the AAMVA Driver and Law Enforcement Standing Committees, by the International Association of Chiefs of Police and the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives.*

