



# HOQUIAM POLICE DEPARTMENT

215 Tenth Street, Hoquiam Washington 98550

*Jeff Myers, Chief of Police*

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## *What to do if you are stopped by the police*

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 an alleged 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 Washington State law 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 street 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 stop in the scene or nearby to 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 what are considered to be "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 that Police Officers are trained to ask for identification, a vehicle registration and proof of insurance. Providing your documentation will simplify and speed up the process.

Some other things to consider:

- 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;
- Bright spotlights pointed into your vehicle 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. State law 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 details.
- If you do not agree with the ticket, please do not argue at the scene. You have a right to contest the charge in court. It is never appropriate or constructive to argue the matter on the side of the street.
- Generally the officer will remain behind you with his or her emergency lights flashing until you are released and can safely pull back into traffic.

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.
- Inform the driver of the vehicle of the reason for being stopped.

**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, and other tasks other than driving safely.

