

MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF

This pamphlet was developed to assist the citizens of Prince William County to better understand what to expect if they are stopped by an officer. Our goal is to ensure that all police related encounters conclude safely and within the guidelines set forth by the Constitution of the United States.

Law enforcement can be a complex and precarious profession. Each year, hundreds of police officers are killed and thousands more injured or assaulted. As a result, our police officers place a great deal of emphasis on officer safety and survival. These practices are instilled in our officers from the very first day of training. While these practices maximize the safety to the officers and citizens, their appearance may be perceived as impolite, cold or offensive.

We recognize that there will be occurrences when citizens may have a negative contact with the police, and as a result they experience feelings of frustration or dissatisfaction.

Many times ill feelings may have resulted from a lack of understanding of police procedures. In addition, officers sometimes do not take the time or have the opportunity to fully explain why they took certain actions that may have appeared offensive to a citizen.

I hope that the information presented in this brochure will assist you in a better understanding what to expect if you are stopped by the police.

Charlie T. Deane
Chief of Police

QUESTIONS??

Call or visit our website
NON-EMERGENCY
703-792-6500

CRIME PREVENTION UNIT
703-792-7270
WWW.PWCGOV.ORG/POLICE

PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE
703-792-7245

EASTERN DISTRICT COMMANDER
703-792-7200

WESTERN DISTRICT COMMANDER
703-792-6530

CHIEF OF POLICE
703-792-6650

Thank you for taking the time to learn about your police department. If you have any questions or comments, feel free to contact me.



Charlie T. Deane, Chief of Police
Prince William County Police Department
1 County Complex Court
Prince William, VA 22192

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU ARE STOPPED BY THE POLICE



**PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY
POLICE DEPARTMENT**

WHY THE POLICE STOP PEOPLE

Police officers are trained to detect and investigate violations of existing laws. Every situation is unique but some primary reasons for a stop may be:

- Moving traffic violation
- Criminal Investigation
- Equipment or safety concern about your vehicle
- Person(s) appear in need of assistance
- You are in the area where a crime just occurred
- You may fit the description of a suspect
- You have been pointed out as a witness or suspect
- You may have violated the law

IF YOU ARE STOPPED BY THE POLICE WHILE IN YOUR CAR

- Safely pull your vehicle to the far right shoulder of the road. If the vehicle is unmarked, and you are unsure if it is a legitimate law enforcement officer, indicate that you know they are behind you by using your turn signal or flashers and continue to drive (not speeding) to a place that you feel safe in, such as a convenience store or other well-lighted area.
- If the vehicle is unmarked, you can ask to see the officer's identification. If you are still uneasy, ask the officer to have a marked police car respond, or call the Police non-emergency number (703-792-6500) on your cell phone to verify the officer's identity.
- Sit calmly, with your hands visible on the steering wheel. If you have passengers, ask them to sit quietly with their hands visible.
- Remain in your vehicle.

- Turn on the vehicle's interior light during hours of darkness.
- Inform the officer if you have a weapon (gun, knife, rifle) and/or a concealed handgun permit.
- Follow the officer's instructions.
- Produce license and registration when requested.
- Tell the officer where it is BEFORE reaching for it, especially if it is tucked away in the glove box or some other place.
- Offer any explanations for your driving behavior before the officer returns to his/her vehicle.
- Don't become argumentative, disorderly, or abusive.

Virginia law requires a driver to show their operator's license and registration information upon request of a Police Officer, regardless of whether the officer is in uniform or not.

IF YOU ARE APPROACHED BY POLICE ON THE STREET

Innocent individuals are often offended, even angered, because a Police Officer has detained them for questioning. Although the delay may be inconvenient, the officer believes there is a reason (reasonable suspicion) to stop and ask you questions. Many stops are initiated for one of the following reasons:

- You may be in the vicinity of a crime that has recently occurred.
- Your clothing might be similar or identical to that worn by the suspect of a crime.

- Someone may have called or pointed you out to the police complaining about your presence or that you looked "suspicious".
- You might be acting in a manner that the officer considers "suspicious" and you act even more suspicious after realizing the officer is observing you.

Once the officer is able to determine that you are not the individual he or she is looking for, the officer should apologize for the inconvenience.

In the interest of safety, please provide your cooperation and compliance when approached by an officer. You may seek an explanation from the officer or the officer's supervisor afterward. Touching or threatening an officer, or acting in a disorderly manner could result in criminal charges being placed against you and you could be arrested.

YOU MAY BE SEARCHED

Police officers may at any time request permission to search a person, vehicle or property. If permission is freely given, the officer may conduct a search as granted. You could also be searched for the following reasons:

- When arrested.
- When a warrant exists for you.
- When you have given consent.
- When probable cause exists which indicates a law has been violated.
- When the officer suspects you may be armed.