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What Happens If A Police Officer Stops Your Vehicle?

What to do if you are stopped.

- Stop your vehicle as far out of the lane of traffic as possible. Stay in your vehicle and turn on the interior light. Good lighting assists good communication. Relax and remain in your vehicle. If you leave the vehicle, you subject yourself and the officer to danger.
- Keep your hands in view at all time, preferably on the steering wheel. Wait for the officer to request your license and registration.
- Police officers are trained to ask for identification first, and provide an explanation second. Then, give the officer a chance to explain why you were stopped. Providing your documentation will speed the process. Remember, in most cases, the officer is in uniform, displaying a badge and name tag. You have the advantage of knowing with whom you are dealing. Extend the courtesy by presenting the requested paperwork without an argument. It makes sense and it's the law.
- Do not argue the citation with the officer. If you think that the citation was wrongly issued, the proper procedure is to request a hearing through the district court.

Why did the officer...

Why did the officer sneak up along my car?

- Police officers are trained to minimize their exposure to traffic and, therefore, reduce the likelihood that they will be injured. The second reason is that they are trained to protect themselves tactically. Many police officers have been killed by drivers who are wanted for various crimes, or have reason to believe they may be suspected of a crime.

If it is only a minor offense, why did two or three officers show up?

- Officers in the vicinity frequently back each other up without being summoned. This is a protocol that maximizes safety for the officers.

Why did the officer sit in the police car for so long?

What are they doing?

- Most Northborough Police Department cruisers are equipped with a mobile computer that allows the officer to verify that your driver's license status is valid. This process, although comparatively fast, could take a few minutes.

Why did you stop me?

- Moving violations are the most common reason that a vehicle is stopped for. Some examples include speeding offenses, failure to stop at a stoplight or sign, failure to use a signal, or failure to drive within the marked lines.
- License, registration or equipment violations are other reasons a vehicle may be stopped by an officer. It is not uncommon for a driver to be in violation of the law without knowing it. Massachusetts's motor vehicle laws are long and complex. Depending on the circumstances, officers may arrest an operator, issue criminal or non-criminal citations, or give a warning for those violations.
- Investigations often involve searching for a car in association with a crime. In today's mobile society, criminals use cars to facilitate crimes. Your vehicle may match the description of a suspect's vehicle.
- Courtesy or safety concerns are other reasons an officer might stop your car. For instance, your trunk may be open, something may be hanging under the vehicle, or you may have left something on your roof.

What if I don't agree with the ticket?

- All Citizens have the right to an appeal before a Clerk Magistrate. Follow the directions on the back of the citation. Criminal Citations may be appealed to the Westborough District Court, 175 Milk Street, Westborough, MA 01581

What if I don't like the officer's demeanor?

- An officer's demeanor is a difficult characteristic to measure relative to how it is delivered and received. The Police Department is committed to positive citizen contacts and proper conduct. If you feel that the officer's demeanor was improper, the department has an internal affairs system to investigate such claims.

How will a citation affect my insurance?

- This is determined by the Merit Rating Board. Contact your insurance agent for more information.
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Vehicle Searches

Consent Searches

- If an officer asks your permission to search your vehicle, you have the right to refuse.

Probable Cause Searches

- A police officer may be aware of certain information that legally allows a search of your vehicle without permission.

Did you know...

- When driving a motor vehicle, you must have a valid driver's license and registration in your possession. Without these, you could be issued a citation
- It is the driver's (not the owner's) responsibility to make sure all of the lights and safety equipment are functioning.
- As the driver, it is your responsibility to ensure that children are wearing their seatbelts or are in their child safety seats.
- You must signal your intent to pass or turn before performing the action.
- Following too closely to the vehicle in front of your vehicle is a moving violation. You should be at least three car lengths away.
- Children under age 12 and pets are prohibited from riding in the backs of open pick-up trucks.
- Thickly settled zones have a 30 mile per hour speed limit
- You are required to stop for a solid yellow light when safe to do so