

Close encounters of the police kind

Commentary By

Over the years I have experienced many forms of interaction and communication with the public in my role as a police officer. Sometimes the safety measures and precautions taken by police officers are misunderstood and appear to be unnecessary.

However, every officer knows that even a routine traffic stop or citizen contact has the potential for danger. The following guidelines are provided to assist you and the police in making this encounter safe for everyone.

If you are stopped or contacted by an officer, these simple tips may help:

- Maintain your composure and avoid actions and language that can be misinterpreted by the officer.
- If the officer has a “reasonable suspicion” that you have a weapon, you may be searched for the weapon.
- If you are arrested, do not resist or interfere with an arrest for any reason, and do not make threatening actions or statements to the officers.
- When stopped for a traffic violation, pull over in a safe area. Do not get out of your vehicle unless the officer asks you to.
- Keep both hands visible on the steering wheel, and if it is dark outside, turn on your dome lights.
- If you are issued a citation, sign it. This is not an admission of guilt, and refusing to sign could result in your arrest.
- If you feel an officer has mistreated you, report the incident to a police supervisor or agency head within 24 hours.

Remember that laws and enforcement procedures vary from one city, county or federal agency to another. Contact your local police if you have questions.

Finally, become familiar with the law, and remember that the easiest way to avoid putting yourself in this situation is to simply make good choices and obey the law. ♦



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