

What to do if confronted by police

Law enforcement is a dangerous occupation. It is not the only dangerous occupation, but unlike most other jobs, much of the danger of policing comes from the actions of other persons. At times during the course of their duty, police officers must confront persons and issue commands. Commands are different than common police inquiries. Commands are used to increase the margin of safety for officers and are necessary because there are persons that would intentionally harm or kill police officers.

Although relatively few officer/citizen contacts involve police commands, if you are given a police command:

1. *Comply with the officer's commands* - even if you did not do anything wrong. You may not know why you are being confronted, but there is a reason. Do not escalate the situation with unnecessary questions, non-compliance, aggressive language, or oppositional behavior.
2. If you do not understand the command, tell the officer that you do not understand, that you are cooperating, and ask the officer to repeat the command.
3. Initial commands of police officers may include "stop" "take your hands out of your pockets" and "show me your hands." Police officers are authorized to stop persons when warranted. They need to see your hands because weapons and objects that can be used as weapons, are held in the hands.
4. If commanded to do so, do not hesitate to drop or otherwise remove as directed any object held in your hands.
5. Do not put your hands in your pockets. Do not take anything out of your pockets. Do not place your hands anywhere that they cannot be readily seen by officers.
6. Do not pick up any object. Do not behave in any way that is likely to be interpreted as an effort to retrieve a weapon. Do not mimic drawing or pointing a weapon, with or without an object in your hands. Do not act aggressively or threatening, even in jest.
7. Law enforcement officers act on what they believe to be true at the time. A person holding or moving an object in a manner that a firearm might be held or moved is likely to be perceived as a firearm, especially under the stress of the situation and in limited light conditions.
8. If you have a firearms permit and have a firearm on you, raise your hands high above your head with fingers spread apart. Inform the officer (1) that you have a firearms permit (or are otherwise in legal possession of a firearm), (2) that you have a firearm on you, and (3) advise the officer where your firearm is located. Then precisely follow the officer's directions.
9. You may know that you pose no threat to officers. You may know that you did not do anything wrong, *but police officers do not know this*. At the time of confrontation, you represent a possible unknown threat. Remain compliant and non-threatening throughout the interaction, which can include a weapons "pat down." Eventually, the facts of the situation will be sorted out and you will have an opportunity to tell your story.
10. If you are confronted by a police officer and you have committed a crime, have an outstanding arrest warrant, are illegally in possession of a weapon or contraband, or are otherwise likely to be arrested, consider this – better to be arrested under those circumstances than to assault or kill a police officer or be harmed or killed by a police officer. If arrested, do not resist.

Law enforcement officers are accountable for their behavior. Any perceived inappropriate behavior on the part of the officer can be addressed through established police, civil, and criminal procedure after the interaction.