

What to do During a Traffic Stop or Car Crash



The police are here to help us, to protect us, and to make sure everyone follows the law. Sometimes the police will stop you while driving because of a traffic violation such as speeding, not stopping at a stop sign or an expired registration.

Most people become nervous when the police stop them while driving or ask questions after a car crash. This resource guide provides information to help you if you are stopped by the police or have contact with the police.

What should I do if the police pull me over?

1. Turn on your hazard lights.
2. Pull over slowly to the right side of the road.
3. Put your car in park.
4. Stay in the car and let the officer approach your car. The officer may approach on the driver's side or passenger's side. Roll down the window on the side they approach. If there are two officers, roll down both windows.
5. If it is dark outside, turn on your car's interior lights.
6. Keep your hands on the steering wheel until directed by the officer to get your documents, such as your driver's license, car insurance or car registration.
7. It might be helpful to tell the officer where your documents are located. For example, "My registration is in the glove compartment. Is it ok to get it?"
8. Give the documents to the officer.
9. Wait in the car while the officer reviews your documents. The officer may go back to their car to check their computer. This can take several minutes.
10. Stay in your parked car until you are told you can leave.

What should I be aware of when the police pull me over?

- The officer does not know who you are until they meet you. Keep your hands on the steering wheel after you roll down your window so the officer feels safe.
- There will be flashing lights that may be bother you.
- The officer may shine a flashlight into your car to see inside.
- The officer will have a radio on. You will hear different voices and noises.
- The officer may give you a ticket for a traffic violation. It is important to remember that everyone gets tickets and that you will be ok.
- Put the ticket in a safe place to read when you are done driving.



Additional resource guides and a full list of references at <https://www.delawareautismnetwork.org/>.

Sawchenko, C., Fletcher, A., Mallory, S., & DNEA CDS & Autism Delaware Teams. (2023). *DNEA resource guide: What to do during a traffic stop or car crash*. Delaware Network for Excellence in Autism.

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What should I do if I'm in a car crash?

Unfortunately, most everyone will be in a car crash during their lifetime. That is why we have car insurance. If you are in a car crash here are some steps to take.

1. Make sure that everyone is ok inside your vehicle, including yourself.
2. Call 911 and let them know what happened. Tell 911 if anyone is injured.
3. Turn on your hazard lights.
4. Move your car off the roadway, if possible. Wait for the police to arrive. Do not leave.
5. Get out of your car if it is safe to do so. Stand on the side of the road; do not stand in the roadway.
6. Share your name, phone number, and insurance card with the other people involved with the car crash.
7. Sometimes people who are in an accident take pictures of the cars that were in the car crash. You can do this, if you like.
8. Ask for a copy of the report or the complaint number from the police officer who comes to the car crash.

What should I do if my car breaks down?

1. Try and move the car off the road.
2. Turn on your hazard lights
3. Stay inside the car for safety reasons.
4. Call someone to help. It could be a family member or friend. If needed, call a tow truck to take your car to a mechanic shop. Be prepared to tell anyone you call your exact location.
5. If you are stuck in the road or on a busy highway, call #77. This number is used to report disabled vehicles in need of immediate assistance.

Tips

- Be polite
- Wait in the car
- Ask the officer before moving any parts of your body (ask if you can take your wallet out of your pocket)
- Be aware that these rules apply to all passengers in the car
- After the officer is finished talking to you, ask any questions you may have
- A first responder can be a police officer, fire fighter or paramedic

Interested in participating in a practice traffic stop?

The Delaware Network for Excellence in Autism (DNEA) offers traffic stop practice sessions for drivers and passengers.

Visit cds.udel.edu/dnea/mockdriving for dates and times.

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