

## OFFICER SAFETY

Most citizens already realize that law enforcement is a difficult and dangerous profession. Hundreds of police officers are killed each year, and thousands more are injured and assaulted. For these reasons, police officers tend to be extremely cautious. They place a great deal of emphasis on officer safety and survival. Certain safety practices are instilled in our officers from the first day of their careers. Although the procedures maximize safety for the officer, they may seem standoffish, impolite or offensive to citizens who may not consider such precautions necessary with "them".

Even though you have no intention of doing the officer harm, he/she will probably maintain a defensive posture until the officer feels that there is no risk of confrontation or injury. As far as police officers are concerned, there is no such thing as a "routine" traffic stop. Each stop has the potential for danger.

## IN ALL POLICE ENCOUNTERS

There are times when citizens who have contact with the police come away with feelings of frustration. The Elmira Police Department does not condone police misconduct of any type. In our experience, we have learned that many of those negative feelings are often a result of not knowing the reason(s) an officer has made certain requests or acted in a certain manner. Unfortunately, demands on a patrol officer do not always permit time for explanations at the time you are stopped. Hopefully, the information presented here will give you and understanding of police procedures and let you know what to expect from a police officer if you are stopped.

## Questions/Compliments/Complaints

If you have a question about procedures or a complaint about your treatment, contact the Elmira Police Department and ask to speak with a supervisor. You may also send a letter of compliment if you feel the officer was particularly helpful in your situation.

### How to Contact the Elmira Police Department

#### Mailing Address:

Elmira Police Department  
317 East Church Street  
Elmira, New York 14901

**Chief of Police**  
(607) 737-5630

**Deputy Chief of Police/Administration**  
(607) 737-5631

**Deputy Chief of Police/Operations**  
(607) 737-5811

**Patrol Supervisors' Office**  
(607) 737-5623

**Detective Bureau Supervisor**  
(607) 737-5610

**Elmira Police Department Web Site**  
<http://www.ci.elmira.ny.us>



**Elmira Police  
Department**

## *What To Do If You're Stopped By A Police Officer*



## TRAFFIC STOPS

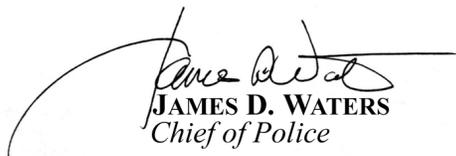


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# WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF THE POLICE STOPPED YOU?

Sometimes even a very routine encounter may cause a person to feel intimidated or to respond in a manner which gives rise to conflict or suspicion. The Elmira Police Department strives to provide services to everyone in the community fairly and equally. We are providing this information to help citizens better understand what to expect from police officers if they are stopped. A familiarization with law enforcement concerns and practices will help avert needless confrontation or misunderstanding. However, we are not offering legal advice, just information.

Although there are no specific guidelines for citizens in handling contacts with police, the following advice is beneficial. The goals of the police department are to improve police-community relations and to have contacts and interviews resolved without unnecessary conflict or injury to either the officer or citizen. This information will hopefully help to minimize your stress and anxiety during your contact with the police and, at the same time, give you some insight into the concerns and procedures of the officers.



**JAMES D. WATERS**  
Chief of Police

## IF YOU'RE STOPPED IN YOUR CAR

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1. As soon as you notice the police emergency lights, pull your vehicle over to the right and stop.
2. Remain in your vehicle while the officer approaches.
  - Do not attempt to get out of your vehicle or approach the officer.
  - Exiting your vehicle does not assist the officer and may be perceived as a threat.
3. Turn on your interior light if stopped at night.
  - A lit vehicle cabin will reduce the officer's concern regarding weapons or other possible threats within your reach.
4. Keep your hands easily observable, preferably on the steering wheel where the approaching officer can easily see them.
  - Reaching under your seat or into your glove box are actions that will cause the officer concern that you may be reaching for a weapon.
5. Give your driver's license, proof of insurance and vehicle registration to the officer if asked to do so. If your documents are out of reach, tell the officer where they are before you reach for them.

6. Answer all questions truthfully.
7. The officer may issue you a ticket. If you feel the reason is vague or unclear, politely ask the officer for details.
8. You have the right to politely deny a request by a police officer to search your vehicle; however, if probable cause is present, the officer has the right to search your vehicle without your consent.
9. If the officer asks you to step out of your vehicle, do so without any sudden or threatening movements. Give the officer approximately three (3) feet of "personal" space as a safety zone to do his/her job.
10. Do not become argumentative, disorderly or abusive. If you believe that you have been unfairly treated, **DO NOT** make that argument on the side of the road. Your best alternative is to carry your protest to court.

### GENERALLY, POLICE OFFICERS WILL....

- Provide their name and badge number upon request
- Inform the person about the reason for being stopped or questioned.