

Getting pulled over by the police can be an unsettling experience. Knowing how to conduct yourself properly can make the experience less stressful for you and can help prevent the situation from escalating into a search of your car.

### **What to do during a traffic stop:**

- Pull the car over to the nearest, safest, well-lit area.
- Be respectful to the police officer. Obey all commands, keep your hands where they can be seen, and don't say or do anything to make the officer nervous.
- Stay in your car and remain calm.
- Answer questions directly and as briefly as possible.
- Provide your license and registration as quickly & efficiently as possible.
- Observe if the officer has a dash camera or some other type of recording device to memorialize the traffic stop. Those are designed to keep both YOU and the officer safe. If you see a dash cam, make a mental note.
- **DO NOT VOLUNTEER INFORMATION ABOUT ANYTHING.**
- **DO NOT GIVE PERMISSION TO SEARCH YOUR CAR.**
- **POLITELY DECLINE TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS OTHER THAN YOUR NAME, DRIVER'S LICENSE, INSURANCE, AND REGISTRATION, but remain polite.**
- Even if the officer is rude or obnoxious, do not argue.
- Drivers are not required to submit to field sobriety tests or a preliminary breath test at the scene of the traffic stop. Although the officer will probably arrest you if you refuse, your refusal eliminates evidence that could be used against you in a criminal proceeding. However, implied consent statutes in Maryland require a driver to submit to a **formal breath or blood test**. Refusal to submit to a formal test can have harsh administrative consequences.

### **What the police can do during a traffic stop:**

- The police can ask you to step from your vehicle – for no reason at all.
- The police can ask your passengers to step from your vehicle – for no reason at all.
- The police can ask for your license and registration.
- The police can walk a drug- sniffing dog around the car during the traffic stop. If this happens, pay attention to the actions of the dog handler and the behavior of the dog. If the dog handler reports a positive alert for drugs, the police have probable cause to search your car.
- The police can search your vehicle if they have probable cause that there is evidence of a crime inside the car. This includes, among other things, the smell of marijuana and admission of illegal activity.
- The police can pat you down for officer safety.