TRAFFIC SAFETY SERIES

PULLED OVER AT NIGHT: WHAT SHOULD I DO?

Be cautious and cooperative at the same time.

Traffic stops can be stressful. These general steps are intended to make your actions predictable and help both you and the officer see what is happening.

WHEN YOU SEE EMERGENCY LIGHTS

- Stay calm. Activate your turn signal and pull off or to the side of the roadway as soon as it is reasonably safe to do so.
- Do not make sudden turns or movements. Choose a location where you can get fully out of the travel lane when possible.
- Once stopped, put the vehicle in park and turn off the engine and audio devices.
- At night, turning on the interior light can improve visibility.

ONCE YOU ARE STOPPED

- Remain in the vehicle unless the officer directs you to exit.
- Keep your hands on the steering wheel or in a visible location.
- Follow the officer's instructions. If you need to reach for a license, registration, or another item, communicate before reaching if you are unsure what the officer wants.
- Ask passengers to stay calm and follow instructions.

IF YOU GENUINELY AREN'T SURE IT'S POLICE

- Slow down and activate your hazard lights to signal that you see the vehicle.
- Move toward a well-lit, populated location while driving safely.
- Call 911 and explain that a vehicle displaying emergency lights is attempting to stop you. Ask the dispatcher to confirm the stop and follow their instructions.
- If safe, note identifying details such as vehicle type, plate, or badge/name.

WHY THIS WORKS

Using signals, slowing down, stopping safely, keeping your hands visible, and communicating your actions reduces uncertainty. If you have a specific safety concern, communicate it clearly rather than making sudden movements or leaving the scene.

IMPORTANT: TRAFFIC LAWS AND PROCEDURES VARY BY JURISDICTION

This guide provides general safety information, not legal advice. Follow lawful instructions and local law.

Sources: Arizona DPS - Traffic Stop Safety; Arizona DPS - Police Impersonator Advisory (June 2026)

General safety and educational information. Traffic laws and procedures vary by jurisdiction. In an emergency, call 911.