

“Wait, I Cannot Hear, What Shall I Do During Traffic Stops by a Police Officer?”

By Denise A. Johnson, Wisconsin Statewide Project Coordinator SUD/MH Services for the Deaf/Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind

Every day police officers are pulling people off the road during traffic stops. Now, what shall a person who is Deaf or, hard of hearing need to know what to do during the traffic stops and how to effectively work with the police officers?

When you see a police officer is behind you with his/her flashing lights. Put your car signal/blinker on to let the police officer know that you are aware and know to pull over and find a safe place to park. Park your car as soon as possible. You will need to pull off to safe area on the right side of the emergency lane on freeways, or pull to a safe and lighted area on the road, or pull into a store, gas station, or business' parking lot if there no place on the road to park your car.

1st Step- Keys turn off



2nd Step – Roll down window



3rd Step – Keep Hands at 10 and 2



Park your car in a safe area, turn your engine off, roll your driver window down and put your Communication Card then Print it from (<https://dhhcouncil.wisconsin.gov/dhhfiles/pdf/CommCardPDF.pdf>) then put on your car's dashboard where is visible to the police officer. Then put your hands on your steering wheel at 10 and 2 o'clock (so that the officer can see your hands clearly). The police officers' first priority is keeping themselves SAFE and any hand movement is seen to threaten to the police officers' safety. That is why you need to keep your hands visible at the wheel when you are communicating or/and working with the police officers. Following these simple rules will keep you and the police officer safe. Also, DO NOT touch the police officer at all.

Do NOT GET OUT OF THE CAR! Keep your hands on the steering wheel until the police officer comes to your window and is able to see you clearly. You wait until the police officer starts talking to you then slowly show your hands and then point to the Communication Card on the dash board. If you do not have one then slowly sign “I am Deaf” or “Point Your Ear and Shake your Head No”.

The police officer may or may not be aware that you cannot hear. It is possible that the police officer may have the Communication Card; or you could share your Communication Card with the police officer.

If there no Communication Card, then the police officer will need to write you a note on his/her note pad. The police officer may give you his/her note pad to write your notes to them. When the police officer ask for your information (driver's license, car insurance and car registration cards) then you can write back to police to let him/her know where your driver license, insurance card and car registration card are located in

your car. You may also show the Communication Card to the officer and point to where your information cards and other information are located such as the glove compartment, wallet, purse, etc.

The police officer will take your information back to the police car to check it out. While you are waiting in the car, put your hands back on your steering wheel at 10 and 2 and wait calmly for the police officer to return to your window. When the police officer returns your car, he/she may either give you a ticket or let you go. If the police officer gives you a ticket, DO NOT argue or discuss your ticket fines with the police officer. You will need to bring your ticket(s) to the court and explain your side of the story. Then the judge will either support the police officer or the judge may reduce or waive your fines.

Getting Arrested:

Anytime there is a reason for police to arrest you, again you will need to stay calm and keep your hands visible at all times. Police will let you know when to get out of the car. Then follow the police officer's orders. If you are instructed to do so, get out of the car slowly and keep your hands visible. Do not put your hands in your pocket and do not use sign language or gestures.

Follow police orders; for example:

The police will ask you if you have anything that will hurt the police like sharp tools, knives, guns, etc. in your pockets before he/she pats you down. Before patting you down, you either tell the police what sharp objects you have on you or that you do not have anything in your pockets that could harm him/her.

There are some police officers trained to put the hand cuff in the front so that you can continue to communicate either by using gestures or by writing notes back and forth. The police officer will decide, based on whether you are calm or not, where to place the hand cuffs, with in the front or in the back. But if you are aggressive then the police officers will hand cuff you in the back to keep themselves safe.

The police are not required to provide interpreter services for traffic stops. However, if for any reason you are arrested the police are required to provide you with an interpreter at the police station. The police officer at the police station may not have the interpreter right away. This depends on the time of the day and the availability of the interpreters. The police officer will either put you in the interrogation room or put you in the holding cell until the interpreter arrives.



Interrogation Room

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Instructions/Information:

“How to Answer Questions During a Traffic Stop:

<http://www.wikihow.com/Answer-Questions-During-a-Traffic-Stop>

“Know Your Rights: When Encountering Law Enforcement:

https://www.aclu.org/files/kyr/kyr_english.pdf

Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Council: Communication Card-

<https://dhhcouncil.wisconsin.gov/dhhfiles/images/Visor%20Card%208-2015.pdf>

Wisconsin State statute under Chapter 346: “Rules of the Road”-

<https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/statutes/statutes/346>

News:

“N.C. Trooper Investigated in Fatal Shooting of Deaf Motorist”

http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/25/us/nc-trooper-being-investigated-for-shooting-of-deaf-man.html?_r=0

Video Resources:

“First Responder Communication with Deaf and Hard of Hearing Citizens”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kSKZHZdfImc>

“Marlee Matlin On Deaf And Police Interaction”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pAvevviVwjY>



