

## **WHY DO DEPUTIES STOP PEOPLE?**

There are many different reasons why a deputy might stop you. Whatever the reason, the deputy needs your cooperation.

- The deputy may want to warn you about a potentially dangerous situation.
- You may have committed a traffic violation.
- Your vehicle may match the description of one used in a criminal act.
- The deputy might think you are in trouble and need help.

If you are stopped by a deputy while driving, you may feel confused, anxious or even angry. These are natural feelings, but remember, traffic stops can also be stressful and dangerous for the deputy. Each year, a number of law enforcement officers are killed or seriously injured while making a "routine" traffic stop. Police officers are especially vulnerable during the hours of darkness.

**With this in mind, there are things that you, as a law-abiding citizen, can do to help lessen the uneasiness of the experience.**

*Remember: Be courteous and cooperative in any stop by the police. If you are courteous and cooperative, they will respond in kind.*

Washington State law requires that all drivers shall yield the right of way to emergency vehicles. Drivers are to immediately pull over to the right, stop and remain in a stopped position until the emergency vehicle has passed.

### **What to do when an officer stops you:**

When you see the emergency lights and/or hear the siren, remain calm, slow down and pull over in a safe location.

Do not exit your vehicle unless asked to do so. This is for safety reasons.

Keep your hands on the steering wheel so the deputy can see them.

If you are stopped at night, please turn on your interior light.

Inform the deputy of any weapons in your vehicle and their location.

Do not reach or point to the location. We understand that many people legitimately carry weapons in their cars, we just don't like surprises.

Avoid any sudden movements, especially toward the floorboard, rear seat or passenger side of the vehicle.

Comply with the deputy's request to see your driver's license, proof of insurance and vehicle registration. Washington State law requires you to carry these with you.

If your documents are out of reach, tell the deputy where they are before you reach for them.

If there are passengers in your vehicle, encourage them to remain quiet and cooperate with instructions. You, as the operator, are solely responsible for your vehicle and its occupants.

Avoid becoming argumentative. Arguing will not change the deputy's mind. If you contest the violation, you will have an opportunity to address the matter in court.

Answer all questions truthfully.

The deputy may issue you a ticket. If you feel the reason is vague or unclear, politely ask the deputy for details.

If asked to sign the citation, do so. This is not an admission of guilt it merely shows you received the citation.

*Understand that each situation is unique and the deputy must alter his or her response to fit the circumstance. Generally, however, a deputy;*

Will provide his/her last name upon request.

Will inform a person of the reason for being stopped.

Will only arrest a person for a crime committed in the officer's presence, or when the officer has probable cause to believe the person has already committed the crime.

### **Questions/Compliments/Complaints**

If you have a question about procedures or a complaint about your treatment, contact the Sheriff's Office 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. Compliments or complaints about officer conduct should be made within a reasonable time.