



Chief Susan Riseling

A University of Wisconsin – Madison Police Officer, has just stopped you. We realize that this experience is a significant emotional event in your life. We can assure you that the officer will complete all necessary business and

release you as soon as possible. In most instances this will be 15 minutes or less. The following are some suggestions on how to act and help the officer complete his/her duties.

As members of the UW-Madison Police Department, we have developed this guide to help you understand why you might be stopped by an officer, and how you can expect to be treated. It's important for you to understand what you can expect when an officer stops you.

We also want you to know that you have the right to compliment or complain about an officer's actions. If you have questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact us. We want to hear from you!

### What Should I Do If I'm Pulled Over In My Car?

If you are driving a motor vehicle and an officer signals you to stop, you must pull over. That's the law.

Stay in your car, and if it's dark, turn on the interior light. Do not leave your car unless directed to do so by the officer. Relax, don't make any sudden movements or reach for items inside the vehicle which could be construed by an officer as a potential threat to his/her safety.

Keep your hands on the steering wheel. Wait for the officer to approach your vehicle. The officer will begin by identifying him/herself and that they work for the UW-Madison Police Department. Next the officer will explain to you why you were stopped and ask if you have any reason explaining your behavior regarding the violation for which you were stopped. **(A UW officer will always inform you of the reason that you're being stopped)** The officer will then ask you for your driver's license. If you don't have your license with you, verbal identification will be requested. Please provide the officer with the requested information.

Moving traffic violations are the most common reason for stopping a vehicle. However, you may also have been stopped for a registration or equipment violation. A criminal investigation may be another reason for being stopped or your vehicle may match the description of a vehicle that was involved in a crime.

At some point during the stop, the officer may ask you and any passengers to step from the car for a variety of reasons. Please follow the instructions the officer gives you.

Our actions during a traffic stop are guided by the fact that many police officers are assaulted and killed each year during traffic stops. Our goal is to protect you, the motorist, and to ensure our own safety. We feel that it is important for you to know that most of the UW-Madison Police Departments traffic stops are video/audio recorded.

### If You Are Issued a Citation .

Don't argue at the scene. You have the right to contest a citation before a judge at a later time. This doesn't require the service of an attorney. Please refer to "A Traffic Citation – Your Rights & Responsibilities" a pamphlet that will be provided to you along with the citation for further information on handling the citation.



## Frequently Asked Questions

**Q. When a car is stopped, it appears that the officer is “sneaking up” on the driver. At night, the officers shine their lights into the car. Why is that?**

A. Officers are trained to minimize their exposure to traffic and potential danger from within the vehicle. At night, the bright lights illuminate the interior of the vehicle which is another safety consideration for the officer.

**Q. If I’ve only been pulled over for a traffic offense, why do other police officers show up?**

A. It is not uncommon for officers who are in close proximity to back each other up, even if they aren’t requested. This is just routine for safety reasons. It is also possible that the initial or secondary patrol vehicle may be a field-training unit, which consists of two officers.

**Q. Why does the officer sit in the car for so long? What are they doing?**

A. Technology now allows an officer to verify your driving status and check your vehicle registration directly from the patrol car. Because this information is accessed via computer and dependent upon its reliability, unanticipated delays may occasionally occur. While it may seem as if the officer has kept you waiting for a long time, in reality, it’s normally only for a few minutes.

## I’d Like To Speak With Someone Regarding The Officer’s Actions. What Should I Do?

Your comments are very important to us. If you would like to compliment or complain about an officer’s actions, please:

**Complaint:** Call us and ask to speak with a supervisor, or request that a complaint form be mailed to your address. Once you receive the form you may complete the form as instructed and return it to the UW-Madison Police Department.

**Compliment:** Can be made by mail or call and ask to speak with a supervisor.  
Professional Standards  
1429 Monroe St.  
Madison, WI. 53711  
(608) 262-2957

**Officer’s Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Officer’s Badge Number:** \_\_\_\_\_

“Striving For Excellence - Serving With Pride”

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New Castle, Delaware

## University of Wisconsin-Madison Police Department

# What Should I Do If I Am Stopped By The Police?



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