

5. You may be acting in a manner that the officer considers "suspicious" and you may act even more "suspicious" after realizing that the officer is observing you.

The police officer does not wish to detain you any longer than necessary. Once the officer is able to determine that you are not the individual that he or she is looking for, the officer will often apologize for the inconvenience and then quickly leave to resume the search.

### **Don't Be Offended...**

Most citizens already realize that law enforcement is a difficult and dangerous profession. Hundreds of police officers are killed each year, and thousands more are injured or assaulted. For these reasons, police officers tend to be extremely cautious. They place a great deal of emphasis on officer safety and survival. Certain safety practices are instilled in our officers from the first day of their careers. Although the procedures maximize safety for the officer, they may seem standoffish, impolite or offensive to citizens who may not consider such precautions necessary with "them". Even though you have no intention of doing the officer harm, he or she will probably maintain a defensive posture until the officer feels that there is no risk of confrontation or injury. As far as police officers are concerned, there's no such thing as a "routine" traffic stop. Every stop has the potential for danger.

### **Summary...**

There are times when citizens who have contact with the police come away with feelings of frustration and dissatisfaction. The University of Texas as Houston Police Department does not condone police misconduct of any type. In our experience, we have learned that those negative feelings are often the result of not knowing the reason(s) an officer has made certain requests or

acted in a certain manner. Unfortunately, demands on a patrol officer do not always permit time for explanations at the time you are stopped. Hopefully, the information presented here will give you an understanding of police procedures and let you know what to expect from a police officer if you are stopped.

### **I would like to speak with someone regarding the UTPD. What should I do?**

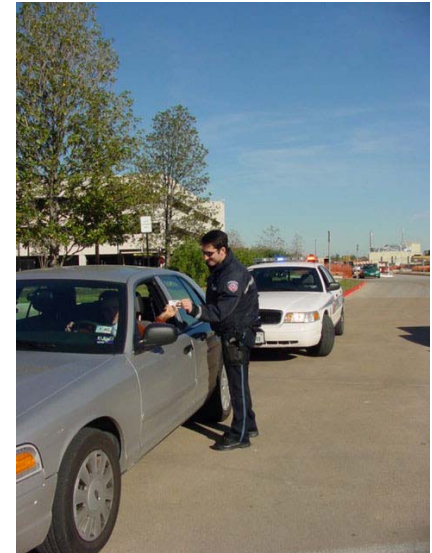
Your comments are very important to us. If you would like to speak with UTPD contact may be made by mail (see address below) or call UT Police Communications Center at 713-792-2890 and ask to speak with a supervisor.

Office Professional Standards, Unit 0160,  
UTMD Anderson Cancer Center  
P.O. Box 301429  
Houston, TX 77230-1429

### **Helpful Telephone Numbers**

911	Emergencies
713-792-2890	Communications Center
713-792-3350	Administrative Office

## **The University of Texas at Houston Police Department**



## **What Should I do if the Police stop me?**

**Visit Us On the Web:**

**[www.mdanderson.org/utpd/](http://www.mdanderson.org/utpd/)**



Commission on  
Accreditation for Law  
Enforcement Agencies, Inc.

The University of Texas at Houston Police Department engages in traffic enforcement to enhance the safety for both the citizens of the university community and those who travel the streets surrounding our facilities.

We realize that being stopped by police officers from any department can be a significant emotional event in your life. We can assure you that the police officer will complete all necessary business and release you as soon as possible. In most instances that will be accomplished in fifteen minutes or less.

The following are some suggestions on how to help the officer complete his/her duties:

**If you are stopped by the Police while in your car...**

1. As soon as you notice the police emergency lights, pull your vehicle over to the right immediately.
2. Although you might not know the reason, you should pull over right away.
3. You may have committed some minor traffic violation without realizing it.
4. There may be some problem with your vehicle of which you are not aware.

**Remain in your vehicle while the officer approaches.**

1. Do not attempt to get out of your vehicle or approach the officer.
2. Exiting your vehicle does not assist the officer and may be perceived as a threat.

3. For the officer's safety and yours, stay in your vehicle unless directed by the officer to exit your vehicle.

**Turn on your interior light if stopped at night.**

A lit vehicle cabin will reduce the officer's concern regarding weapons or other possible threats within your reach.

Keep your hands easily observable, preferably on the steering wheel where they can be seen by the approaching officer.

Reaching under your seat or into glove box are actions that will cause the officer concern that you may be reaching for a weapon.

Give your license, and proof of insurance to the officer if asked to do so.

Most officers will not provide a specific reason(s) for the stop until they have received your license, registration and proof of insurance. This is to avoid debating the reason for the stop prior to acquiring the necessary information.

If you wish to inquire as to why you were stopped or offer any explanation, do so before the officer returns to his or her vehicle.

Answer all questions honestly. Information pertaining to prior arrests or traffic violations is easily verified via the police dispatcher.

If the officer asks you to step out of your vehicle, do so without any sudden or threatening movements.

Give the officer approximately 6-8 feet of personal space as a safety zone to do his/her job.

Remain in your vehicle at all times unless asked to do otherwise.

Do not become argumentative, disorderly or abusive. If an officer has already written a ticket, it cannot be voided at that time. If you believe that you have been unfairly treated, DO NOT make that argument on the side of the road. In the event you are issued a state citation, your best alternative is to carry your protest to court. Whether an officer issues you a citation or gives you a warning is entirely up to their individual discretion.

**If the Police Stop You On The Street...**

Innocent individuals are often offended or angered, or both because an officer has detained them for questioning. Although the delay might be inconvenient for you, the officer believes there is a reason (Reasonable Suspicion) to stop you and ask questions. Most of these stops are not officer initiated. The most common reasons that cause an officer to stop someone are as follows:

1. You might be one of only a few people walking around in the vicinity of a crime that has recently occurred.
2. Your clothing might be similar or identical to that worn by the perpetrator of a crime.
3. Someone may have called the police complaining about your presence or that you looked "suspicious".
4. Someone may have pointed you out to an officer.