



Navigating a Traffic Stop While Armed

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Traffic Stop While Armed – Open Communication is Paramount!

NOTE: Two people with two firearms are about to communicate at a high level! So it's our job to eliminate any barriers to success if at all possible, to ensure the safety of BOTH parties involved!

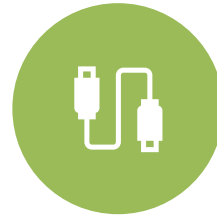
Keep the exchange transactional! (no inefficient forms of communication) No humor, sarcasm, do not debate or argue the facts of the stop. Do this with a lawyer and/or in the court of law. The side of the road where you have no leverage, is not the place for debate over the stop.

Try to avoid any potential for "misunderstandings" - ANY police/citizen encounter can be potential dangerous through "poor communication". Verbally walk through all of your actions and movements so there is clear communication of compliance and intent.

Traffic Stop While Armed – Pulling Over and Immediate Actions



Slow down and pull over safely when you can. If the police vehicle is unmarked and you cannot identify the driver as a uniformed police officer, drive below the speed limit to a well lit, populated area and then pull over.



Turn off your engine and any other device (radio, CD player, tape players, cell phone) and roll down your window so you can speak with the officer. If pulled over at night, turn on interior lights to give the LEO an unhindered view of the vehicle cabin.



Stay in the driver's seat with both hands on the steering wheel (at the 2 and 10 o'clock position). You want your hands to be visible at all times and no furtive movements to assure LEO safety. Be aware that he may have a partner out of perceived view assisting with the stop. Limit movement as LEOs see their personal safety as paramount!



Do not exit the car unless asked to do so. Getting out of your car can be perceived as aggressive behavior and a threat to the LEO's safety.

Traffic Stop While Armed – Interaction During the Stop

- Comply with the LEO's request to see your driver's license and/or registration. If they are in the glove box or console, communicate to the LEO where they are located and wait until told to retrieve them. Then verbally communicate all actions to avoid any misunderstanding or perceived threat to officer safety.
- If you are the driver and/or owner of the car and do not want your car searched, clearly inform the officer of your non-consent in a polite manner. However, if the officer has "reasonable suspicion" OR "probable cause", your car can be searched without a court-issued warrant.
- If you are issued a ticket/citation, sign it. Signing a ticket is not an admission of guilt, only an acknowledgement of receiving the ticket. Refusing to sign the ticket could result in your arrest or additional charges.
- Most officers will not tell you why you were stopped until they have your license and/or registration in hand. Therefore, they will avoid having to debate the reason of stop before they receive these items from you.

Traffic Stop While Armed – Important Action Items

- Gun laws vary state, research the gun laws of any states you plan to travel through or make your final destination.
- Indiana law does not require you to notify LEOs that you are armed. You may do so as a courtesy to put the LEO at ease.
- “Do you know why you’re being pulled over?” This question is a litmus test that will determine the tone and progression of the interaction.
- NEVER say or use the word ‘**gun**’ as this is a trigger word for many LEOs. Simply state, “I have an Indiana Handgun License!” and ask the LEO how he would like to proceed.
- NEVER reach or motion towards your firearm! If the LEO asks you to disarm or relinquish your firearm, politely request the LEO disarm you for the safety of both parties.

Traffic Stop While Armed – My Personal Considerations

- LEOs will often touch the rear of your vehicle upon approach. Cops often touch the tail light of a car they pull over so that, if something were to happen to the officer during the traffic stop, their interaction with the driver could be traced back to the fingerprints left on the vehicle.
- NEVER, NEVER consent to a search of your person or vehicle. If the LEO has probable cause he may search anyway (without a court issued warrant), but never consent. This waves your 4th Amendment rights and anything that happens in the aftermath can be used against you in court! Simply state , “I don’t consent to searches”. Cooperation is key, but don’t compromise your rights.
- If disarmed, the LEO want to may run a check to ensure your firearm is legal. DO NOT let them place it in your car! (put it on the windshield/hood if possible). Simply tell the officer you will retrieve it at the end of the encounter after he leave to ensure safety of all parties. Again, 4th Amendment considerations.



Questions?

How to tell an officer you are armed

