

## **Bias-Based Profiling**

One of the reasons for this brochure is to clearly state that racial and ethnic profiling in law enforcement is totally unacceptable. A fundamental right guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States to all who live in this nation to equal protection is the fundamental right to be free from unreasonable searches and seizures by government agents. Citizens are free to walk and drive our streets, highways, and other public places without police interference so long as they obey the law. They also are entitled to be free from crime, the unlawful acts of criminals, and to drive and walk our public ways safe from the actions of reckless and careless drivers.

The Bartow Police Department is charged with protecting these rights, for all, regardless of race, color, ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation, physical handicap, religion or other belief system.

Because of the nature of their business, law enforcement officers are required to be observant, to identify unusual occurrences and law violations, and to act upon them. It is this proactive enforcement that helps keep our citizens free from crime, our streets and highways safe to drive upon, and detects and apprehends criminals.

It is the policy of the Bartow Police Department to patrol in a proactive manner, to aggressively investigate suspicious persons and circumstances, and to actively enforce the motor vehicle laws, while insisting that citizens will only be stopped or detained when there exists reasonable suspicion to believe they have committed, are committing, or are about to commit, a violation of the law.

Should you encounter a situation where you believe you were stopped by an officer based on your race, color, ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation, physical handicap, or religion, you are encouraged to contact:

Lt. Gary McLin  
863-534-5034

## **Bartow Police Department**

### **Mission:**

The Bartow Police Department will provide professional service in effort to prevent crime, reduce fear, and enforce the law.

## **Bartow Police Department**

### **Vision Statement:**

To provide a peaceful and safe community where citizens and visitors experience hometown values as well as a superior quality of life.

## **Bartow Police Department**

### **Goals & Objectives:**

#### **Benevolent:**

To meet the needs of the citizens of Bartow in a compassionate and efficient manner.

#### **Professional:**

To meet the needs of the citizens of Bartow in a compassionate and efficient manner.

#### **Dedication:**

To provide continuous, loyal, and unwavering allegiance to its citizens.

Pamphlet Courtesy of  
**Bartow Police Department**  
**Community Services Team**

## **Understanding Traffic Stops**

# **BARTOW POLICE DEPARTMENT**

*A Century of Service*



***Joe Hall, Chief of Police***

450 North Broadway Ave.

Bartow, FL 33830

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Fax: 863-534-5030

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## Why Do Police Stop People?

There are many different reasons why you may be involved in a traffic stop by the police. Whatever the reason, the officer needs your cooperation:

- The officer may want to warn you of a potentially dangerous situation.
- You may have committed a traffic violation.
- Your vehicle may match the description of one used in a crime.
- The police may think you are in trouble and you need help.
- You may have witnessed a crime.

If you are stopped by an officer 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 officer.

Many law enforcement officers are killed each year and thousands more are injured in traffic related incidents.

Each year approximately half of all line-of-duty officer deaths were related to traffic incidents. Every stop for a traffic violation has the potential for danger. Help reduce the uneasiness during a traffic stop.

*Florida Statute 316.126 requires all drivers shall yield the right of way to emergency vehicles. Drivers are to immediately pull over parallel to the nearest edge, stop and remain in a stopped position until the emergency vehicle has passed. In addition, when an emergency vehicle making use of any visual signals is parked, the driver of every other vehicle, as soon as it is safe, shall vacate the lane closest to the emergency vehicle when driving on an interstate highway or other highway with two or more lanes traveling in the direction of the emergency vehicle. When traveling on a two lane road, drivers approaching parked emergency vehicles with visual signals activated shall reduce their speed to 20 miles per hour less than the posted speed limit.*



## 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 to a safe location off the roadway.
- Do not exit your vehicle unless asked to do so. This is for safety reasons.
- Keep your hands on the steering wheel so the officer can see them.
- Inform the officer of any weapons in your vehicle and their location.
- Avoid any sudden movements, especially toward the floorboard, rear seat, or passenger side of the vehicle.
- Comply with the officer's request to see your driver's license, proof of insurance, and vehicle registration. Florida law requires you to carry these with you.
- If your documents are out of reach, tell the officer 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 officer's mind. If you contest the violation, you will have an opportunity to address the matter in court.
- Answer all questions truthfully.
- If the officer issues you a citation and you feel the reason is vague or unclear, politely ask him/her for details.
- If asked to sign a citation, do so. It is not an admission of guilt, but means that you will comply with the instructions on the ticket. In some instances failure to sign could result in your arrest.
- You have the right to politely deny a request by an officer to search your car. However, if probable cause is present, the officer has the right to search your vehicle without your consent.

Understand that each situation is unique and the officer must alter his or her response to fit the circumstances. Generally, the officer will:

- ✓ Provide his/her name upon request.
- ✓ Inform a person of the reason for being stopped.
- ✓ Will only arrest a person for a crime committed in his/her 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 Bartow Police Department and ask to speak with a supervisor. You may also send a letter if you feel the officer was particularly helpful in your situation.

Compliments or complaints about the conduct of the officer can be made by using the contact information provided on the back of this brochure.