

Professionalism at the TRAFFIC STOP & STRENGTHENING Community Partnerships

Improving Communications Between the Citizens and Law Enforcement Officers of Rialto



This brochure is designed to educate both citizens and law enforcement about expectations during a traffic stop. Understanding what is expected from both parties improves communication, helps to reduce anxieties, and improves the public's understanding about the need for traffic law, eliminating community-based divisiveness and creating community-based partnerships. Building bridges to the community should occur one traffic stop at a time.



Some things to remember:

An average of three in every ten Americans will be involved in alcohol-related crash at some point in their lives.

The driving behaviors associated with aggressive driving - speeding, red light running, following too closely, and others - cause hundreds of crash-related deaths and thousands of injuries each year.

Lap/shoulder safety belts, when used correctly, significantly reduce the risk of crash-related fatalities and injuries.

Traffic stops often result in the identification of criminals who are suspected in other crimes.

To effectively address these public health and safety issues, law enforcement agencies across the country enforce traffic laws. Traffic law enforcement is a time proven method of:

increasing pedestrian safety, seat belt, child safety seat, and helmet use;

reducing the incidence of impaired and aggressive driving;

increasing the apprehension of dangerous criminals.

However, in recent years, the public has been made aware of incidents that have occurred between citizens and law enforcement during traffic stops. Some of these incidents were positive and did much to advance the public's perception of law enforcement. Other incidents were negative and disturbing, and created public mistrust. The goal of traffic enforcement is to attain voluntary compliance with the law.

If you are a law enforcement officer, here are some ways to improve your traffic stop experience:

- ◆ Invoke the "Golden Rule" and treat the motorist the way you would like to be treated.
- ◆ State your name and identify the law enforcement agency for which you work.
- ◆ Explain the reason for the traffic stop, state the action you will take, and be prepared to answer the motorist's questions about the stop.
- ◆ If you are not in uniform, or you are traveling in an unmarked vehicle, you should present identification to the person you have stopped. If feasible you, may request a marked unit to make the stop for you.
- ◆ Consider the traffic stop "environment." Some motorists may be uncomfortable stopping in a deserted or badly lighted area, and may feel more comfortable if you allow them to proceed to a more populated or better illuminated location. However, always consider officer safety.
- ◆ Be courteous and firm - but flexible.
- ◆ Understand that a traffic stop can be a frightening experience for a motorist, and fear can bring out a person's worst side.
- ◆ Try to find the "positive" in the traffic stop. Use this opportunity to inform and educate. Do not argue with the motorist.

