

Police Frequently Asked Questions

When should I call 911?

Dial 911 in an emergency situation. If you are not sure, call us and let us determine if the situation requires an emergency response. An emergency is any situation where there is a threat to lives or property, which is occurring at the time of the call, or has just occurred.

If you place a 911 call in Jefferson County, your call will go to the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office. The caller's information comes up on a screen and includes the caller's phone number, address, name of billing party, and lists the appropriate fire district that serves the address. The call receiver will need to confirm the information as the information they receive is not always correct.

Try to remain calm when reporting an emergency. The call receiver will ask several questions of you and needs to enter that information into a Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system. Once this is complete, the dispatcher will send the appropriate units.

Why do police stop people?

There are many different reasons why the police might stop you. Whatever the reason, the officer needs your cooperation.

You may have committed a traffic violation.
You may fit the description of a suspect.
The officer might think you are in trouble and need help.
You may have witnessed a crime.

If you are stopped by the police 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 police officer. Each year, a number of law enforcement officers are killed or seriously injured while making the "routine traffic stop". Police officers are especially vulnerable during the hours of darkness.

With this in mind, there are things that you, as a law-abiding citizen, can do to help lessen the unpleasantness of the experience.

- When stopped by the Police Remember:
- A police officer may pull you over at any time for a traffic offense or police investigation.
- When you see the red and blue overhead lights and/or hear the siren, remain calm and safely pull over to the right side of the road.
- Remain in your vehicle unless the officer advises otherwise.
- Keep your hands on the steering wheel so the officer can see them.
- Avoid any sudden movements - especially toward the floorboard, rear seat or passenger side of the vehicle.
- Do not immediately reach for your license or other documents until the officer requests them. Washington State Law requires drivers to show their license, vehicle registration and insurance card upon request.
- If your documents are out of reach, tell the officer where they are before you reach for them.
- If you have a weapon in the vehicle, promptly notify the officer of its location.
- If the stop occurs during darkness, turn on your dome or interior lights so the officer can easily see the interior of your car.
- If there are passengers in your vehicle, encourage them to remain quiet and cooperate with the officer's instructions.
- The officer may issue you a ticket. If you feel the reason is vague or unclear, politely ask the officer for details.
- 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.
- Be honest with the officer. If you really did not see the stop sign or were unaware of the speed limit, let the officer know. Being honest about any situation never hurts.
- Finally, if you receive a ticket, accept it calmly. Accepting it is not an admission of guilt. Your signature is usually, but not always required. Signing it is not an admission of guilt.

What is the Non-Emergency phone number for the Port Townsend Police Department?

To contact the Port Townsend Police Department for reasons other than an emergency, please call (360)385-2322.

Where and when can I get fingerprinted?

Fingerprinting is done at the Port Townsend Police Department by appointment on Wednesday mornings or Friday afternoons. Call the non-emergency police number (385-2322) to make an appointment.

How do I get a copy of a police report?

There is a " " form available at the Police Department for those who wish to request police report information. Some information on police reports may be confidential or not for disclosure under certain laws maintained in the Revised Code of Washington. Each request will be considered individually and responded to in a timely manner.

When do I need to file a traffic accident report?

The driver of any vehicle involved in an accident resulting in injury to or death of any person or damage to the property of any one person to an apparent extent equal to or greater than \$500.00 shall, within twenty-four hours after such accident, make a written report of such accident to police.

Nothing prohibits accident reports from being filed by drivers where damage to property is less than \$500.00.

If police do not investigate the accident, you are still required to file a report of such accident. You may pick up an accident report at the Port Townsend Police Department during normal business hours.