What if I am issued a ticket?

- Do not become argumentative, disorderly, or abusive. If an officer has already written a ticket, it cannot be voided at that time.
- You have a right to contest the ticket in court or to file a complaint with the department if you believe you have been unfairly treated.

You may have entered an area or location generally not open or accessible to the public except during certain hours.

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, and/or you are able to explain your actions or presence, the officer will often apologize for the inconvenience and then allow you to continue on your way.

In All Police Encounters

- Avoid making sudden movements (for your wallet, into your coat, toward your waistband, etc.) until you have informed the officer of your intention to do so and the officer has said it's okay.
- Do not joke about weapons or shooting.
- Do not touch the officer or violate his or her personal space (2-3 feet).
- Always remain calm and avoid being argumentative. If you are uncooperative and refuse to answer questions, the officer is likely to become more suspicious and the encounter will probably last much longer than necessary.
- Comply first, then you may seek an explanation from the officer or the officer's supervisor later.

There are times when citizens who have contact with police come away with feelings of frustration or dissatisfaction. The Alabama A&M University Department of Public Safety does not condone police misconduct of any type. Hopefully, the information presented here will give you a better understanding of police procedures and let you know what to expect from a police officer if you are stopped. However, if you feel you have been unfairly treated or the officer’s actions were inappropriate, you have the right to file a complaint:

- Call us at (256) 372-5555 and request to speak with a supervisor or ask that a complaint form be mailed, faxed, or emailed to you.
- Come into our officer (University Services Building-across from Foster Complex) and you will find complaint forms in the lobby.
- You can also file a complaint electronically on our website at: www.aamu.edu/dps
- You can also compliment an officer using the same mean.
The AAMU Department of Public Safety has a full service police department. Our police officers are State certified, armed, police officers with full law enforcement powers, including arrest both on and off campus. They are the same police officers you may encounter in the City of Huntsville or in your hometown.

Recently, across the country, there have been several unfortunate incidents resulting from contact between citizens and police officers. The Alabama A&M University Department of Public Safety is concerned and would like to avoid having those types of situations occur on our campus. For this reason, the A&M University Department of Public Safety has developed this informational pamphlet to help citizens understand what to expect from police officers if they are stopped and/or questioned. While there are no specific guidelines for citizens in handling contacts with police, a familiarization with law enforcement concerns and practices may help avert needless confrontations or misunderstandings.

We are not offering legal advice. The goals of the AAMU police department are to improve police community relations and to have contacts and interviews resolved without unnecessary conflict or injury to either the officer or the citizen. The following information and suggestions will hopefully help to minimize your stress and anxiety during your contact with the police and at the same time give you some insight into the concerns and procedures of the officers.

Most citizens already realize that law enforcement is a difficult and dangerous profession. Hundreds of police officers are killed each year during traffic stops, and thousands more are injured and assaulted. For these reasons, police officers tend to be extremely cautious. To maximize safety, certain practices are instilled in police officers from the first day of their careers. These procedures 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 there is no risk of confrontation or injury. As far as police officers are concerned, there is no such thing as a “routine” traffic stop. Every stop has the potential for danger.

What Should I Do If I’m Pulled over While Driving?

- As soon as you see the police emergency lights, you must pull your vehicle to the right as soon as it is safe to do so. That’s the law.
- Stay in your vehicle at all times unless told to do otherwise.
- If it’s dark turn on your interior light. A lit vehicle cabin will reduce the officer’s concern regarding weapons or other possible threats.
- Wait for the officer to approach your vehicle. Do not attempt to exit your vehicle or approach the officer. Exiting your vehicle does not assist the officer and may be perceived as a threat.
- Touching or threatening a police officer or acting in a disorderly manner could result in your arrest.
- Relax, don’t make any sudden movements or reach for items inside the vehicle which could be construed by an officer as a potential threat to his/her safety.
- Keep your hands visible at all times. Instruct any passengers to have their hands visible as well.

What Should I Expect From The Officer During The Stop?

- The officer should begin by identifying him/herself and that they work for the AAMU Department of Public Safety.
- 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 for safety reasons and also to avoid debating the reason for the stop prior to obtaining this necessary information.
- Alabama law requires a driver to turn over this information upon request by a law enforcement officer.
- If you do not have the requested information, verbal identification will be requested. Please always provide the officer with the requested information.
- The officer will explain to you why you were stopped and ask if you have any reason explaining your behavior regarding the violation for which you were stopped.
- Driving status and vehicle registration information must be verified via computer through our dispatch system. Because this information is accessed via computer and dependent upon its reliability, unanticipated delays may occasionally occur. While it may seem as if the officer has kept you waiting for a long time, in reality, it’s normally only for a few minutes.
- At some point during the stop, the officer may ask you and any passengers to step from the vehicle for a variety of reasons. Please follow the instructions the officer gives you.