

# TRANSCRIPT

## Effective Communications with Law Enforcement Officers (Police)

### Question 3: Vehicle Stop

#### **Michael Baer, Emergency and Public Communication Access Program Coordinator**

Thanks, got it. Now let's switch topics for a moment. You mentioned when a Deaf person gets pulled-over on the road. Any time a Deaf person is driving and happens to notice the police sirens flashing, telling them to pull over, what would you advise a Deaf person to do in that situation? I've heard various opinions, but what would you suggest to prevent misunderstandings, the use of force, or an arrest from happening?

#### **Chief Ted Baran, Director of Campus Security at Gallaudet University**

That's a great question. Really, that's the most common interaction between an officer and a Deaf person. Pull-overs are the most frequent. It's important that when you see the sirens flashing, pull over right away, and in a safe place, of course, but pull over right away. You don't want any misunderstandings to happen by refusing to stop, trying to leave, or get away. When you do pull over, it's important not to make any quick movements. From the police officer's perspective, we're looking at the person's head. We're looking at the vehicle's side mirrors in order to see any movement. That's a safety issue for officers. If we see any quick movements, people reaching over or bending down, we become a little concerned. We're wondering what they're doing. My advice for anyone who gets pulled over, both during the day and night, especially at night, is don't make any quick movements. Try to keep your hands where they can be seen. One key thing for police is that we need to see where your hands are and your hands are your communication tool. You need to have them open. So, keeping your hands on the steering wheel is fine. Don't move too quickly. Then, when the officer approaches the car, it's really important that as soon as possible you identify yourself as a Deaf or Hard of Hearing person. You can point to your ears and let the officer know you are Deaf. You can point to your hearing aid. Or maybe if a Deaf or Hard of Hearing person has a card or visor, you can show that to the officer. I do train officers to look for that. Or if the officer sees a hearing aid, I train them to think, "Oh, maybe the person is Deaf or Hard of Hearing." Use that. If a person has a card or visor, use it and show the officer right away. Set the tone for that stop. Make sure you keep your hands on the steering wheel. If asked for your license, registration, and insurance, point to the glove compartment and move slowly toward it, while keeping one hand on the steering wheel. If you have passengers in the car with you, make sure they don't make any quick movements either. That's where the officer needs to evaluate the situation for safety reasons. Sometimes

you may be pulled over and you may be waiting for a long time before the officer actually approaches your car. The police officer may be collecting information about you from your license plate and retrieving that information from the computer in his/her vehicle. So be patient and wait. One very important thing to remember is don't get out of your car. Stay inside your vehicle. Just stay. Hope that helps.

