

Tips for Protecting You from Law Enforcement Impersonators

Those who impersonate police officers erode the public's trust in law enforcement and may endanger unsuspecting people. There are several tips you can remember to protect yourself during a traffic stop while helping your police officers do their jobs.

- Make sure it is a marked police unit. If it is not a marked unit, the emergency lights should be built in and are usually not a temporary light placed on the vehicle.
- Try to stop in a well-lit area or a location where there are a lot of people present.
- Turn on your emergency flashers but don't turn off your car.
- Do not get out of the vehicle to meet the officer. Officers usually don't like this anyway.
- Lock your door.
- Look for a uniform, official department jacket, and other equipment used by police officers for the performance of their duties.
- If the officer is in plainclothes, look for identifying clothing and equipment. If unsure, explain to the "officer" that you are unsure about the situation and ask them to display official department identification and badge. Ask where they work and if you can contact their dispatch center to confirm their identity. You may also request a marked patrol unit respond.
- Pay attention to what they are asking. Most officers will advise you of the reason for the stop and request your driver's license, registration, and proof of insurance.
- If they immediately tell you to get out of the car without any preliminary questions, be suspicious.
- Trust your instincts. If they don't seem to be a real police officer they are probably not.

Other Helpful Information:

- There's a law in every state against impersonating a police officer.
- There is a good reason for this. Police officers have a lot of power, and we don't want people pretending to be police officers taking advantage of such power.
- There's also a safety issue. If you're in trouble and seek help from the police, you want the real thing and not someone in a disguise.
- Impersonating a police officer is usually punishable by prison time, a fine, or both. Moreover, people who impersonate police officers for some criminal purposes usually are charged with those underlying crimes as well.
- Those who impersonate law-enforcement officers undermine the public's trust in the men and women charged with protecting us. It is an inexcusable act.
- Large online companies have generally prohibited the sale of law enforcement badges, uniforms and sirens from their Web sites.
- There are people who will attempt to gain a benefit or victimize others by misrepresenting themselves. This is not something that only occurs with police officers. But the serious concern is associated with the power, authority, and trust that people believe will not be violated when contacted by someone they believe is a police officer.

Oregon Revised Statute 162.365 – Criminal Impersonation

A person commits this crime if with intent to obtain a benefit or to injure, deceive or defraud another the person falsely impersonates a public servant and does an act in such assumed character. If the criminal impersonation is of a peace officer, judge or justice of the peace, this is a class C felony.

Oregon Revised Statute 162.367 – Criminal Impersonation of Peace Officer

A person commits this crime if the person uses false law enforcement identification in the commission of an offense. It is a class C felony punishable by up to 5 years in prison and/or a fine up to \$125,000. As used in this statute, “false law enforcement identification” means a badge or an identification card that (a) identifies the possessor of the badge or card as a member of a law enforcement unit; and (b) was not lawfully issued to the possessor by the law enforcement unit.

Oregon Revised Statute 162.369 – Possession of False Law Enforcement Identification Card

A person commits the crime if the person possesses a false law enforcement identification card that identifies the possessor as a member of a law enforcement unit and was not lawfully issued to the possessor by the law enforcement unit. It is a class A misdemeanor punishable by up to 1 year in jail and/or a fine of up to \$6,250.