



ROCKLEDGE POLICE DEPARTMENT  
Office of Chief of Police  
Joseph P. LaSata

1776 Jack Oates Boulevard, Rockledge, Florida 32955  
Telephone 321-690-3988 Fax Number 321-690-3996

## ***Law Enforcement Interactions with Florida Concealed Weapon and Firearms License Holders***

The Rockledge Police Department is committed to keeping our citizens, visitors and officers who serve as safe as possible.

Florida Statute 790.06 - "License to carry concealed weapon or firearm" provides the ability for residents of Florida to carry a concealed weapon or firearm as long as they meet the requirements for citizenship, age, training and other criteria.

For most law-abiding citizens with a Concealed Firearms License (CFL), the most common interaction with law enforcement is when they are stopped for a traffic violation.

There are inherent dangers with being a law enforcement officer. When a police officer approaches a vehicle, they have no idea what they are going to encounter. It may be a young driver crying because it is the first time that they have been stopped, or it may be someone who just robbed a bank who has made up his mind that he is not going to jail. Every traffic stop has the potential to be deadly and every officer has received hours of training reminding them of just how serious of a situation a traffic stop may be.

To be clear, Florida Statute 790.06 - "License to carry concealed weapon or firearm" states that an individual has **no "duty to inform"** a law enforcement officer that they are carrying a concealed weapon or firearm (some states do, however). In no way should a CFL holder feel that they are viewed as a criminal by the police. Officers are aware of the stringent steps CFL holders must go through when issued a license.

In order to further develop a common understanding between law enforcement and concealed weapon/firearms license holders, the Rockledge Police Department offers the following safety tips if you are stopped by law enforcement:

- Make the situation easy and clear for the officer. Pull off the side of the road far enough, if possible, to give the officer enough room to safely approach your vehicle without having to worry about traffic.
- Roll down your windows and turn on the interior lights (night time). If the officer can clearly see inside your vehicle as he/she approaches, it alleviates any concerns of whom or what might be in the car.
- Place your hands on the steering wheel in plain sight as the officer approaches and keep them there while interacting with them (if a person is going to try and kill or attack an officer, it will be with their hands). Do not start searching in the glove box, console or under the seat when the officer approaches. They don't know who you are or what your intentions may be.
- Stay in the vehicle. Your first impulse may be to jump out of your vehicle to explain why you just rolled through that stop sign or why you were going just a little over the speed limit, but your quick exit from your car might be interpreted as a threat by the officer. Their training teaches them that many deadly encounters have started that way.
- Some schools of thought suggest that you should present your CFL and your driver's license/personal identification at the same time. If you do decide to inform the officer that you are armed, Florida law does require that you provide "valid identification" along with your CFL (if you are armed) if demanded by the officer. Just be cognizant of your actions when retrieving your identification, as most CFL holders have it on their person and in close proximity to their weapon. Also, if you store your firearm in your vehicle's glovebox or console along with your vehicle registration and/or insurance information, it is best to inform the officer of the presence of the firearm before immediately reaching for the documents.

- Once the officer approaches and begins speaking with you, make sure that he/she knows what you're going to do. An example of what to say is: **“Officer, I want to let you know that I have a valid concealed carry license in this state and currently have a firearm located on/in \_\_\_\_\_ . My concealed carry license is located \_\_\_\_\_ . How would you like me to proceed?”**
- The officer should then give very specific directions to make sure there is no misunderstanding as to how they want you to proceed. If there is a reason why you can't follow their instructions, you should calmly explain why. Tell the officer where your hands are going and why. Be aware that different officers and different law enforcement agencies have varying procedures when it comes to interacting with armed citizens.
- It is also suggested that you and your passengers avoid using the word “gun” as the officer(s) approach and interact with you. Law enforcement officers are taught at the police academy that if a firearm is seen in a person's possession they should loudly announce “GUN!” so that other officers in the area know that there could be a possible threat to their safety. Officers are conditioned to immediately react in a defensive nature upon hearing the word “Gun.” (Imagine yourself as an officer approaching an unknown vehicle wherein a driver or passenger loudly says *“I've got a gun!”*)
- If you are issued a citation and you feel that it is undeserved, the side of the road is not a good place to argue with the officer. One of your options to dispose of the ticket is to elect to contest it in court. Also, if you feel as if the officer failed to handle the situation involving you being a concealed weapon license holder appropriately, you have the right to contact his or her supervisor after the fact.
- The above tips are also applicable when interacting with the police when armed and not operating a vehicle.
- Be informed and make yourself familiar with Florida Statute 790.06. Further, if you plan to travel to other states or countries, research their specific

requirements and restrictions for carrying your weapon. That information is readily available on the internet.

- If you have any further questions or concerns regarding this topic, please feel free to contact the Rockledge Police Department at (321) 690-3988.