

Below is a link to an article on an incident we had last week involving someone impersonating a police officer. We didn't alert folks at the time because the investigation unfolded pretty quickly and deputies in the area were able to narrow down who we were looking for. Coincidentally, someone in a crime watch just a couple of days earlier asked me about the frequency of these "blue light bandits". These incidents are rare but they do occur occasionally and in this case it was actually a "red light bandit" who was using a fire vehicle.

In South Carolina, you are only required to pull over, stop and remain stopped for BLUE lights. Only law enforcement officers may use blue lights. Fire and emergency medical vehicles use red lights, which you must pull over and yield to, but not remain stopped. The person in this case allegedly represented himself as an undercover officer. We, along with most other agencies, do use plainclothes officers in unmarked vehicles for investigations. If you have any doubt about whether or not you are being pulled over by an actual police officer you should slow down, use your turn signals and try to get to a well-lit public area. You can also call 911 and have dispatch check to see if an officer is trying to pull you over.

While we're on the topic, here's some general rules for interacting with the police if you are stopped: keep your hands on the steering wheel and visible to the officer, don't start digging around for your license and registration until the officer approaches you and asks you for them, if it's nighttime turn on your interior light, if you have a weapon in the vehicle tell the officer about it and where it is located and don't assume why you were pulled over, the officer should tell you even though it may not be the first thing he or she says.

If you're stopped, remain calm. We are taught certain steps and procedures to go through for legal reasons and our safety. Be patient and the officer should explain everything to you.

<http://www.fortmilltimes.com/2010/11/22/1347395/report-man-20-used-dads-cop-car.html>

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