



WHAT TO DO IF STOPPED BY LAW ENFORCEMENT

Every situation is different and every person's personality in responding to law enforcement is different, so advice in handling a situation may vary. Still, a few general principles can apply to most situations and help any pilot be informed and prepared if approached by law enforcement on the ramp of an airport during a flight that is wholly conducted within the United States.

ALWAYS: Be courteous and respectful, remain calm. Answer questions truthfully and succinctly; do not volunteer information.

STEP 1: Ask the law enforcement official in charge about the nature of his/her inspection of your certificates and your aircraft, including what are they intending to do, why, and under what authority.

STEP 2: Request to see the credentials of all the officials who are present and try to record the names, phone numbers, badge numbers, and agencies of all of those officials.

STEP 3: The law enforcement will most likely ask you for your pilot and aircraft documents.

Note: FAA Regulations 61.3(l) and 61.51(i) (1) states that a person must present their pilot certificate, medical certificate, logbook, or any other record **required by Part 61** for inspection upon a reasonable request by the Administrator, NTSB, or any Federal, State, or local law enforcement officer. Also, 49 USC § 44103(d) allows for inspection of the aircraft registration certificate by a United States Government, State, or local law enforcement officer.

Exercising Privileges of Private, Commercial, or ATP pilot certificates:

- Must have pilot certificate.
- Must have appropriate photo ID.
- Must have medical certificate.
- Does not have to have logbook in possession, but may be required to present logbook for inspection after receiving written request.

Exercising Privileges of Sport Pilot certificate:

- Must have pilot certificate.
- Must have appropriate photo ID.
- Must have valid U.S. driver's license or medical certificate.
- Must have evidence of required authorized instructor endorsements.

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Exercising Privileges of Student Pilot certificate:

- Must have student pilot/medical certificate with appropriate endorsements.
- Must have appropriate photo ID.
- Must have logbook with appropriate endorsements.

Note: Law enforcement may ask for other documents than those specified under FARs. For example, existing guidance by CBP to law enforcement incorrectly suggests that pilots must present for inspection airworthiness certificate, weight and balance calculations, aircraft logbooks, etc. AOPA is working to correct this misinformation.

STEP 4: Law enforcement may ask or state that they are going to inspect or search the aircraft and its contents visually, physically, or with dogs.

Make the following statements:

- “I do not consent to this search, but I will not interfere”.
- “If you disassemble any part of this aircraft, including inspection plates, you may be rendering this aircraft unairworthy”.

STEP 5: If you are a member of the AOPA Pilot Protection Services, and it is during normal business hours, call 1-800-872-2672 to speak with a Legal Services Plan counselor.

STEP 6: If possible, record the event with a camera. However, law enforcement officials may react negatively to being recorded in the conduct of their business and may object or advise that doing so is not allowed. Note the location of any security cameras on the airport ramp. Make detailed written notes during the event or as soon as practical. Identify any other persons present who may be witnesses to the inspection and search.

STEP 7: Check your emotional status! Are you able to continue your flight safely after such an ordeal?



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