



Campus Cops Corner

-Public Safety Tips for the PPCC Community-

Public Safety Newsletter

On January 26, 2003, Fort Collins police found the body of 20 year old Univ of Northern Colo student Lacy Jo Miller. Lacy had been reported missing to the police on Saturday, January 18, 2003, after she failed to return home from a Friday night out. Investigation revealed that she had been the victim of a police impersonator. Police were soon led to her killer, and a 22 year old man confessed and was arrested. The incident led then Colorado Governor Owens to sign new legislation which made "police impersonation" a felony.

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POLICE IMPERSONATORS

"Common Sense Tips"

Law enforcement is an honorable profession, and police are consistently found among the top of lists of occupations which are "trusted" by the general public. Accordingly, most of us defer to police authority when situations present themselves. There are, of course, consequences to refusing to do so. It is, however, that very trust which is used against us by police impersonators.

When these instances occur, it usually happens (1) at night, (2) by an "unmarked vehicle," and (3) by someone in civilian clothes as opposed to a police uniform. My colleagues at "Two Hearts For Lacy" (www.2hearts4lacy.org) have come up with a list of common sense tips to use if you think you're being contacted by a police impersonator.

Slow down or maintain your speed (but don't speed up), put on your emergency flashers, call 9-1-1 and tell the dispatchers where you are and what you suspect. They will be able to confirm whether or not this is a real police officer. If so, you should pull over at that point. If not, stay on the line and follow the dispatcher's directions.

If you don't have a cell phone with you, slow down, and drive to well-lit and populated location. The "2 Hearts" website suggests a place such as a Wal-Mart, which has parking lot video, is a good choice. They add to leave the vehicle in gear (rather than placing it in "park"), so that you can drive off quickly if needed. If you remain in doubt about the officer's identity, do not get out of the car, and just roll the window down a little. Tell the officer you are afraid. Do not hand him your license, registration or other papers. Police are taught to identify themselves by name and department when making traffic stops. Ask the officer to call for a marked unit. If the officer refuses, drive away, but continue to use your flashers and do not speed. Drive to another location such as a police station or fire station.

There are serious legal consequences to not deferring to police, so please use common sense. Police do, in fact, use unmarked vehicles on occasion, and a marked unit with a full rack of emergency lights on its roof is likely legitimate. A small light on the dash or in the grill might not be.

Additionally, if you're contacted by a possible impersonator, please attempt to get a vehicle description including a license number in addition to obtaining a description of the impersonator and report that to your local police. You may be the difference in saving someone's life.

Important Numbers & websites:

- 24-7 Emergency Number: 502-2911
- Emergency Alert Sign Up: www.ppcc.edu/alert
- Crime Stoppers
634-STOP (7867)
- Anonymous Reporting
www.SAFE2TELL.org

1-877-542-7233