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## How to deal with cops at Burning Man (2022 update)

by Mark Atwood <mark.atwood@gmail.com>

### **\* Do not consent to a search.**

Never consent to a search. Say the phrase **"I do not consent to a search."**

The cops are trained to make you flustered and to "take command" of the situation. Or they can be "polite": "Mind if we take a look around?" Yes, you do mind: "I do not consent to a search."

Even if you think you have nothing for them to find, even if you think you have done nothing wrong, even if you think it will smooth things over in the moment, do not consent to a search.

Never consent to a search of your body, of your clothing, of your possessions, of your car, of the trunk of your car, of your trailer, of your truck, of your RV, of your tent, or of your camp. And of course, never consent to the search of anyone else's property.

The cops will ask the other people in your group, camp, or car, not just the driver or leader. "Mind if we take a look?" You must all sing the same song: "I do not consent to a search." Just one person in your group can screw it up for all of you.

If the cops threaten to arrest you if you won't let them search, continue to say "I do not consent to a search".

If the cops threaten to bring a sniffing dog, say it again: "I do not consent to a search". The judiciary has stated that the dog must be there and working within 15 minutes after they first stop you. If they try to hold you longer than that, or even if they threaten to hold you longer than that, make sure you note that on the Law Enforcement Feedback Form, and make sure that you tell your lawyer about it later when it's getting sorted out.

The reason the cops are asking is because they lack "Probable Cause". As soon as they think they do, they will stop asking, and do it anyway. As long as they are still asking, remember "I do not consent to a search".

They may search anyway. Once they start, no matter what you do or say, they will probably trash your stuff and dump it out on the playa. Do not give them consent once they start. Do not help them. Do not open or unlock anything for them. If they trash your stuff, make sure you note that on the Law Enforcement Feedback Form.

## **\* Being Questioned.**

Cops can ask you questions.

They can say things like "We're just talking", or "What do you think of ...?", or "Can you help us out?"

You do not have to answer their questions, and you probably shouldn't.

## **\* Drugs.**

Never answer any questions about drugs.

You never use drugs, you never have drugs, you never provide drugs, you have no idea where to get drugs, you don't know anyone who has drugs, you do not want drugs, and you do not know anyone who does.

That includes cannabis in any form in any amount. Cannabis is still not legal on BLM land, not even for medical use. Having a medical card from any state is not a defense. The Nevada personal use possession law is not a defense. If you get a "ticket" or a "citation" for possession of cannabis and you don't successfully contest it it is still a "conviction". It's not "just a ticket". If you get one of those "tickets", get a lawyer. There are lawyers that specialize in helping Burners.

If you have a legal prescription to a Schedule II medication, such as Adderall, Ritalin, Oxycontin, Methadone, Xanax, or Klonopin, keep your pills in their correct prescription bottle and locked up somewhere secure, or directly on your person. Never leave any prescription pill or bottle out. You do not have to tell the cops that you have a prescription drug, you do not have to answer any questions about why you have a prescription, you do not have to answer any questions about your treatment, diagnosis, or doctor. Do not answer any such questions.

## **\* Do not lead them to your camp.**

They may try to make you lead them to your camp.

They can be very commanding and matter of fact about it. They may say "We are going to your camp." They will make it sound as if you have no choice. You do have a choice, and you are going to choose to not to lead them to your camp. Never lead them to your camp.

If they really insist on you leading them somewhere, then lead them to a Black Rock Ranger outpost, and then introduce them to your good friends the Black Rock Rangers. You should always know where a Black Rock Ranger outpost is at all times, anyway.

## **\* Keep your tent or RV closed, locked if possible.**

If your tent or RV is closed, they are supposed to need a warrant to open it, or they are supposed to need your consent. They may search your tent or RV anyway. Do not give them consent once they start, and do not help them once they start. Once they start, they will probably trash your stuff, no matter what you say.

Always keep your tent or RV closed when you are not in it. If possible, use opaque screens or sheets to block transparent windows so there is no line of sight into your tent. Reflective panels and reflective cloth are also good for keeping the heat of the sun out of your tent or RV.

You may want to use a luggage lock to lock the zipper of your tent when you are not in it. Never open any lock for them, make them break it open.

## **\* Your name and your ID.**

If they ever stop you, you do have to tell them your "wallet name" as it is printed on your official ID. Tell them your name as it is printed on your official ID, driver's license, or passport. You do not have to show them your ID if they demand to see it. You especially do not have to go to your camp to get your ID for them. Never do that.

If you are driving a vehicle, including an art car, you must keep your driver's license with you, and you do have to give it to the cop on demand if you get stopped. This does not include passengers. If you are a passenger, and a cop stops the vehicle, you do not have to show your ID, and you probably should not.

If you are not a US citizen and you are visiting on a visa waiver, you do not have to carry your passport with you. If you are a resident alien you do have to carry your green card with you and you do have to show it if they specifically ask to see it. You do NOT have to tell them if you are a US citizen or not.

## **\* Being Detained, or "Am I free to go?".**

The magic phrase is: **"Am I free to go?"**

Keep saying it. As soon as they say "yes", leave immediately and without another word.

If they write a ticket, you must take it. Put it in your pocket, and then say "Am I free to go?"

If they ever say you are not free to go, you say "Am I being arrested?". If they say you are not being arrested, you say again "Am I free to go?". Keep it up as many times as necessary. Yes, it will sound

like a stupid kid game, like "stop copying me", but the game is very real with very real stakes, and this is their game to win, and yours to lose.

### **\* Being Arrested.**

If they ever say anything like "you are under arrest", or ever do anything to make you think you are being arrested, such as them restraining you in any way, you must immediately say the following magic phrase (memorize it!): **"I do not consent to any search. I invoke my right to remain silent. I want to speak to my attorney."** And then YOU SHUT THE FUCK UP.

Do not try to talk your way out of the arrest. Do not say anything at all about your arrest until you are talking in private with YOUR attorney. Not with those cops, not with any other cops, not with any onlookers, not with anyone else who was arrested, not with anyone who is being held with you. Not with your campmates, not with your friends, not with your family. Not even your spouse. Assume all police cars, transport vans, and cells are bugged. Assume the cops will lie about what you say to anyone. Assume everyone you meet while you are being held will lie later about anything you said, and will lie while testifying against you. Your best defense will be being able to testify that you never said anything to anyone. You invoked your right to remain silent. Use it.

As soon as they put their hands on you, do not struggle, do not fight them, and do not "go limp". They love breaking skulls for "resisting arrest", and you don't want the skull they break to be yours.

There are attorneys who specialize in helping Burners.

### **\* Getting Bounced.**

If the Black Rock Rangers or the BMorg decide that you are being too much of a problem, or that you are a threat to the event or to other Burners, they can choose to have you removed from the event. They can bounce you by telling you to pack up and leave, or they can bounce you by calling the cops who will arrest you, or they can bounce you by calling the bouncers. The bouncers will put their hands on you and will physically remove you from the event. If you try to fight them, they can call the cops who can arrest you. If the BMorg or the Black Rock Rangers bounce you, don't fight it. Just pack up and leave.

### **\* Alcohol.**

The camps with open bars that are giving away booze may ask to see your ID to verify you are older than 21. You don't have to show it to them, but they don't have to give you free booze either.

The state liquor cops **will** be there, and they **will** try to sting your camp. Yes, every camp, yes even yours. If you are giving away booze, even if it's only beer or wine, and the person you are about to

give it to looks like they could possibly be under 21, you should verify their age by checking their ID. An alcohol service bust is an expensive way to ruin your burn for your entire camp.

All vehicle drivers MUST be completely sober and MUST NOT have an alcoholic drink within arm's reach of the driver.

If your camp or art project is using a truck or other vehicle during build or strike, there MUST NOT be any open container of alcohol anywhere in the car or cab, not even in the shotgun seat or in the back.

When you are driving in at Arrival, and out again at Exodus, there MUST NOT be an open container of alcohol in the vehicle, not even held by a passenger, not even in the back seat. You may have to be hard-assed with your passengers about this. Do not celebrate arrival with a drink until you have actually parked and shut down your vehicle.

This shouldn't need saying but it does: you and your passengers must strictly obey DUI laws on the drive in and then the drive back home. Too many camps have had to build and burn with people missing or days late because they got popped for DUI, and too many Burners are dead or crippled because of DUI. Not just alcohol. Cannabis may now be effectively legal in Nevada and most of the US, but driving while stoned is illegal. And stupid.

If the cops pop you for DUI, you will get zero sympathy from other Burners.

### **\* Law Enforcement Feedback Form.**

While the cops are dealing with you, you need to be memorizing the color and design of their uniforms and memorizing their name tags. They are supposed to be wearing visible name tags while in uniform. Yeah, right.

As soon as you get away from the cops, promptly go to Center Camp or to a Black Rock Ranger outpost and then immediately fill out a Law Enforcement Feedback Form and turn it in. The feedback form is also available on the Burning Man website if you have internet access.

If you personally with your own eyes see the cops detaining anyone, arresting anyone, or searching anyone or anything, do the same thing: memorize what you can in the moment and then fill out and turn in a Law Enforcement Feedback Form as soon as you can.

Try to include a timeline. Make sure to include if they trashed stuff, they drove fast leaving a dust plume, or they dumped stuff on the playa surface. The BLM have strong opinions about the other cops MOOPing their land.

Each morning, the feedback forms are read out loud in a meeting with the police leadership and the event leadership. Imagine the hilarious levels of cringe that must be, and smile.

## **\* Your camera.**

You may choose to use a camera to record the cops. The Judiciary at all levels has clearly stated that everyone, including you, has the right to record the police. All cops know that rule, and they hate it, but too bad.

The cops cannot lawfully order anyone to stop recording. They cannot lawfully order anyone to delete photos or video. They cannot lawfully delete any photos or video themselves. If they do, they themselves are knowingly breaking the law and that will be very useful in court. If a cop tells you to turn off your camera, keep recording. If they threaten to arrest you for recording, keep recording. While you are recording them never get in their way and stay back at least 35 feet / 10 meters.

If you ever see a cop order anyone to stop recording or to delete anything, make sure that goes on the Law Enforcement Feedback Form.

## **\* "Undercover" cops.**

The cops claim there are very few "undercover" cops at the event. This is a very carefully nuanced untruth.

There are cops at the event who are not "undercover" but instead are "plain clothes". This means that instead of wearing uniforms or visible badges they are dressed up to look like Burners.

They do not have to tell you they are cops when you ask them. You will not be able to "sense" that they are cops. Some of them have been doing this every year for more years than you have come to the event yourself. Some of them actually are Burners. But on or off duty, they are still always cops.

People have been busted by a cop who was wearing only sparkles and a miniskirt. Cops have been seen dancing nearly naked on top of speakers next to mainstages, pointing out the use of cannabis to uniformed cops circling the dancing crowd.

If someone you do not know asks for drugs or offers to sell or trade for drugs, they are a cop. If you met them this year at this Burn, you do not know them. If someone sits down next to you and gets around to asking about drugs, they are a cop. If you meet this cute nearly naked burner out dancing, and you make eyes with each other, and go walking out together into the playa, and they say that they are starting to come down, and do you know where they can get anything to bring them up again so that you two can go party in your tent, they are a cop. If someone invites you to come to their tent so you can smoke your own stuff in private with them, they are a cop. No, really, yes, they are a cop, and their coworkers are eagerly standing by to ruin your life.

Here is your one chance to safely fuck with the cops, if you are getting sick of these game of theirs: When one of them tries one of these tricks on you or near you, loudly tell everyone around that there is a cop here asking about drugs. Having a bullhorn helps.

## **\* Kids.**

If you are under 18, and the police ever stop you and start questioning you or detaining you, the only thing you should ever say to them is "I want my parents". Say nothing else at all to them.

## **\* What if I need "Police Services"?**

What if you are lost? Or a camp mate is lost? Or a child is lost? Or you have found a lost child? What if you have found someone who is injured or who is unable to take care of themselves? What if you are assaulted? What if something is stolen? What if someone is hurt? What if you find someone who is dangerously out of sorts? What if you just can't even?

Go to a BLACK ROCK RANGER or to an ESD VOLUNTEER. If the cops are actually needed, the Rangers or ESD can summon the cops on their radios and can deal with the cops so you don't have to. If the cops are not needed, then the Rangers or ESD can summon the right help for you.

Know what the Black Rock Ranger uniform is, and how it's different from the various cop uniforms. Rangers wear khaki shirts and khaki hats with the Burning Man logo on their hats and on their chests and on their backs and on their vehicles. ESD have yellow shirts that have "Emergency Services" printed on them.

Black Rock Rangers are not cops. They really are there to help you, no kidding.

**Have a great Burn!**