

City of Las Cruces Safety Traffic Operations Program

Red Light Photo and Speed Enforcement

1. What violations will the red light and speed enforcement cameras be monitoring?

The cameras will monitor both red light running as well as speed violations. This means a motorist may receive a violation for traveling through the intersection in excess of the posted speed limit even if the light is green.

2. At what point will the red light cameras be set to take pictures - - the beginning of a yellow light or when it turns from yellow to red?

The cameras are not “armed” until the light phasing turn’s red unless your speeding. Red light pictures are not taken until the light turns red and only if a violator is behind the limit line (i.e. stop bar) when the signal is red before proceeding into the intersection. The system will not take red light violation pictures if the light is yellow, or if the vehicle has already crossed the violation line (i.e. limit line/stop bar) before the signal turns red.

3. At what point in the intersection must your vehicle pass to be clear?

If the vehicle passes the violation line (i.e. limit line/stop bar) when the signal is green or yellow there is no red-light violation. If the light is red and the vehicle crosses the violation line, a series of pictures will be taken.

All violation images will be reviewed by the City and all violation determinations are at the sole discretion of the City.

4. Will the citations you receive in the mail go against your driving record, raising your automobile insurance rates?

No, violations are treated in a similar fashion as parking tickets and they will not go against your record.

5. How does the City of Las Cruces plan to enforce collection of fines levied against those drivers who choose to totally ignore them?

Under the ordinance, individuals may pay or appeal the citations and request a hearing.

Defaults will be pursued for collection of debt by a collection agency, if individuals do not remedy the default and pay, vehicles may be seized and impounded.

6. Are the honest, laws abiding drivers the only ones who will truly be penalized?

No, anyone who obeys the laws will not be captured by the camera or penalized.

Driving is a privilege, and to maintain this privilege, drivers agree to obey the laws. Drivers who break the law will be penalized.

7. Who will be responsible for calibrating and certifying that the red light and speed enforcement cameras are working properly, or will this be left up to the red light camera company and/or the city?

All systems are audited and verified monthly by Redflex Traffic Systems personnel under the supervision of the Las Cruces Police Department. In addition to system checks, speed detection results are verified with a hand held laser unit to validate the accuracy of the in ground detection system. A tolerance of +/- 1 mph is required in order to validate the system. The Las Cruces Police Department is advised of the schedule for verification testing and is encouraged to participate and oversee. In addition, the police department typically verifies our test results by using their own equipment and comparing readings. There is no third party verification.

As our speed detection equipment uses a time/distance calculation as opposed to a radar or laser emitted beam, the equipment does not require calibration per say but rather is checked for accuracy and verified by using a separate technology.

8. Will there be a standard length of time for yellow lights city-wide, or will it vary from intersection to intersection?

Yellow-times are regulated by both state and federal guidelines (FHWA). The lengths of yellow times are optimized to ensure efficient flow of traffic and public safety. Factors that determine the length of the yellow light timing, include, but are not limited to, peak and off peak vehicle traffic volumes, 85% percentile

approach speeds, reaction time, and intersection geometries. The minimum yellow time at any signal in Las Cruces is 4 seconds. Some intersections have longer yellow times depending on the width to cross the actual intersection.

The City's yellow lights will not fall below the recommended minimums as dictated by state and federal guidelines.

9. Will the traffic light timing sequence change (i.e. yellow lights shorten) in the future in order to increase city revenue?

Absolutely not. Yellow light timings will follow all state and federal guidelines which are outlined in the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices.

10. What is red light running?

A nationwide study of fatal crashes at traffic signals in 1999 and 2000 estimated that 20 percent of the drivers involved failed to obey the signals. In 2006, almost 900 people were killed and an estimated 144,000 were injured in crashes that involved red light running. About half of the deaths in red light running crashes are pedestrians and occupants in other vehicles who are hit by the red light runners.

Motorist are more likely to be injured in urban crashes involving red light running than in other types of urban crashes. Institute researchers studied police reports of crashes on public roads in four urban areas during 1990 – 91. Occupant's injuries occurred in 45 percent of red light running crashes, compared with 30 percent of other crash types.

11. How often do drivers run red lights?

A study conducted during several months at five busy intersections in Fairfax, Virginia, prior to the use of red light cameras found that, on average, a motorist ran a red light every 20 minutes at each intersection. During peak travel times, red light running was more frequent. Analysis of red light violation data from 19 intersections (without red light cameras) in four states found that 1,775 violations occurred over 554 hours, for a violation rate of 3.2 per hour per intersection.

12. What are red light cameras?

Red light cameras can help communities enforce traffic laws by automatically photographing vehicles whose drivers run red lights. A red light camera system is connected to the traffic signal and to sensors that monitor traffic flow at the crosswalk or stop line. The system continuously monitors the traffic signal, and the camera is triggered by any vehicle entering the intersection above a preset minimum speed and following a specified time after the signal has turned red. Violations occurring within 2/10ths of a second after the signal changes to red

“generally aren’t recorded unless your speeding, then in ground sensors will record speed and trigger cameras. In addition, many red light camera programs provide motorists with grace periods of up to ½ seconds. Depending of the particular technology, a series of photographs and/or video images show the red light violator prior to entering the intersection on a red signal, as well as the vehicle’s progression through the intersection. Cameras record the date, time of day, time elapsed since the beginning of the red signal, vehicle speed, and license plate. Tickets typically are mailed to owners of violating vehicles, based on review of photographic evidence.

13. Isn’t conventional police enforcement sufficient?

Enforcing traffic laws in dense urban areas by traditional means poses special difficulties for police; who in most cases must follow violating vehicles through a red light to stop it. This can endanger motorist and pedestrians as well as officers, and police cannot be everywhere at once. Traffic stops in urban areas can exacerbate traffic congestion. Communities do not have the resources to allow police to patrol intersections as often as would be needed to ticket all motorists who run red lights and/or speed. Red light cameras allow police to focus on other enforcement needs.

14. Isn’t longer yellow signal timing more effective than using red light cameras to reduce red light running?

While provision of adequate yellow signal timing is important and can reduce red light running, longer yellow timing alone does not eliminate the need or potential benefits of red light cameras. Studies have shown that increasing yellow timing values associated with guidelines published by the Institute of Transportation Engineers can significantly decrease the frequency of red light violations. In addition, a 2002 Institute study of modified yellow and all red traffic signal timing at urban intersections reported that injury crashes were reduced 12 percent at experimental sites relative to comparison sites.

An Institute study conducted in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, evaluated incremental effects on red light running of first lengthening yellow signal timing, followed by introduction of red light camera enforcement. Yellow signal timing was increased by about one second at two intersections where red light cameras were installed. Results show that while increase yellow signal timing reduced red light violations by 36 percent, the addition of red light camera enforcement further reduced red light violations at these sites by 96 percent beyond level achieved by longer yellow signal timing.

15. Do the cameras photograph every vehicle passing through an intersection?

No. Cameras are set so that only those vehicles that enter an intersection after the light has turned red are photographed. Vehicles that enter on yellow and are still in an intersection when the light changes to red are not photographed. This technology is intended to identify driven by motorist who enter an intersection after the signal has turned red.

16. Does someone review the photographs before motorists are ticketed?

Yes. Trained City of Las Cruces police officers review every picture to verify vehicle information and ensure the vehicle is in violation. Tickets are mailed to vehicle owners only in cases where it is clear the vehicle ran a red light and/or speeds thru the intersection.

17. Do red light and speed enforcement violate motorists' privacy?

No. Driving is regulated activity on public roads. By obtaining a license, a motorist agrees to abide by certain rules, such as to obey traffic signals. Neither the law nor common sense suggests drivers should not be observed on the road nor have their violations documented. Red light camera systems can be designed to photograph only a vehicle's rear license plate, not vehicle occupants, depending on local law. Only vehicles driven by motorists who violate the law are photographed.

18. Are special laws needed to allow localities to use red light and speed enforcement cameras to cite violators?

Before cameras may be used for law enforcement, laws must authorize enforcement agencies to cite red light and speed violators by mail. The legislation must make the vehicle owner responsible for the ticket, establishing a presumption that the registered owner is the vehicle driver at the time of the offense. This can be accomplished either by state statutes or in some states by local legislation. Red light cameras currently are authorized in about half of US states. Depending on state law, violations photographed by red light cameras are commonly treated in one of two ways — as traffic violations or as the equivalent of parking tickets. If, as in New York, red light camera violations are treated like parking citations, the law can make registered vehicle owners responsible without regard to who was driving at the time of the offense.

19. Are red light and speed enforcement programs expensive?

Camera equipment costs vary based on the type of camera, complexity of the intersection, and technical requirements. A red light camera system with installation

costs approximately \$100,000. A single red light camera can be used at several locations once the sites are equipped to work with the camera, allowing communities to move cameras among sites without drivers knowing which ones are active at any given time. Startup costs can be offset by fines, savings from crashes prevented, and by freeing police to focus on other enforcement efforts.

20. Isn't the main purpose of the red light and speed enforcement cameras to make money?

No. The objective of the photo enforcement is to deter violators, not to catch them. Signs and publicity campaigns typically warn drivers that photo enforcement is in use. Revenue is generated from fines paid by drivers who continue to run red lights, but this is a fundamental component of all traffic enforcement programs. Independent audits of red light camera enforcement have found that these programs generally do not generate excess revenue. For example, the California state auditor reported in 2002 that red light cameras were not generating large amounts of revenue. The financial status of only two of the state's seven camera programs was break-even or better. The US General Accounting Office reported in 2003 on the contribution of federal funds to local use of photo enforcement technology and the amount of revenue generated by these programs.

The report found that photo enforcement program revenues were lower than program costs in three jurisdictions, while revenues in two other jurisdictions exceeded program costs.

21. Does the American public support the use of red light and speed enforcement cameras?

The large majority of the US public supports red light cameras. A 2000 Institute survey in ten cities — five with cameras and five without — reported more than 75 percent of drivers supported camera enforcement. A 2002 nationwide survey sponsored by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and conducted by the Gallup Organization found that 75 percent of drivers favored the use of red light cameras. A 1996 survey by the insurance Research Council found that the highest support for red light cameras was in large cities, where 83 percent of respondents supported their use, compared with 52 percent of respondents in suburbs.

22. Do major US cities use red light and speed enforcement cameras?

Cameras are used for law enforcement in Albuquerque, Atlanta, Baltimore, Chicago, Denver, Houston, Los Angeles, New York City, Philadelphia, Phoenix, San Diego, San Francisco, Seattle, and Washington, DC, plus many smaller communities.

F.A.Q's: Red Light Photo and Speed Enforcement Program

Red light running is a dangerous and costly problem.

- Red Light running is the leading cause of urban crashes according to the insurance Institute for Highway Safety.
- In 2005, 165,000 injuries and over 800 fatalities in the U.S. were attributed to red light running. There were over 1.8 million accidents at intersections.
- The financial cost to the public is estimated to be more than \$ 14 billion each year.
- An average of 3.2 red light violations occur per hour according to a 2003 study conducted by University Transportation center for Alabama in 4 states at 19 different intersections.
- Deaths caused by red light running are increasing at more than three times the rate of increase for all other fatal crashes.
- More people are injured in crashes involving red light running than in any other crash type.
- 63 percent of all Americans will witness a red light running incident more than more than once each week, according to a survey conducted by the U.S. Department of Transportation and the American Trauma Society.
- Reduction in red light running through a comprehensive red light camera program will promote and protect the public health, safety and welfare of your community.

Most people run red lights because they are in a hurry, when in fact they only save seconds.

- Almost all drivers (96%) fear being struck by a red light runner.
- Majority of Americans (56%) admit to running red lights.
- Red light runner can be anyone of us who drives.
- One in three Americans knows someone who has been injured or killed in a red light running crash.
- Red light running is often a result of aggressive driving, and is completely preventable.

Sources:

1. www.iihs.org/research/topics/rlr.html
2. "A Nationwide Survey of Red Light Running: Measuring Driver Behaviors for the 'Stop Red Light Running' Program, June – August 1999, Old Dominion University
3. "Stop Red Light Running," Federal Highway Administration Safety Website: safety.fhwa.dot.gov/programs/srlr.htm.2002.
4. R.A. Retting and A.F Williams, "Characteristics of Red Light Violators: Results of a Field Investigation," Journal of Safety Research (1996):27.1,9-15

If you have further questions regarding the Red light Camera Enforcement, feel free to contact the Las Cruces Police Department at: (575) 528-4161.

If no answer, call the following: (575) 528-4234, (575) 528-4276 or (575) 528-4289.