



Red Light Running Cameras: Would Crashes, Injuries and Automobile Insurance Rates Increase If They Are Used in Florida?

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Executive Summary

(Full report at <http://health.usf.edu/NR/ronlyres/C1702850-8716-4C2D-8EEB-15A2A741061A/0/2008pp001008OrbanetalRedLightPaperMarch72008formatted.pdf>)

The theory behind red light cameras as potentially effective is that they rely on deterring red light running primarily through punishment of a specific driving behavior and secondarily by changing drivers' experience. By definition, the punishable behavior and resulting potentially harmful action will already have taken place when a ticket is issued. In other words, the crash, injury, and mortality risks do not change immediately, if at all.

Even if red light cameras could be effective in the long run, which is debatable, they are associated with an added cost, consisting of fines, crashes and injuries that could have been avoided by using engineering solutions, which are effective in both the short term and the long run. Because the rigorous and robust studies conclude cameras are associated with increased crashes and costs, any economic analysis of cameras should include these newly generated costs to the public. Indirect costs to the public are usually not considered in the calculation of total revenues and profits generated from red light cameras.

Cities and counties should follow the state's lead and likewise pursue engineering improvements to enhance intersection safety for all drivers and passengers. Proven engineering practices and counter-measures can reduce crashes and injuries due to red light running, as well as other causes of intersection crashes. A public health approach to improved intersection engineering is particularly needed since 26% of Florida's traffic fatalities occur at intersections (with and without traffic signals), in contrast to 18% nationally (NHTSA, 2005). This means that more than 22% of traffic fatalities in Florida occur at intersections for reasons other than red light running, as red light constitutes less than 4% of total traffic fatalities. Further, **red light cameras are an inefficient means to raise revenue for local and state governments and can disadvantage the state's economy.**

Running a red light can cause severe traffic crashes especially when one vehicle runs into the side of another. Red light cameras photograph violators who are sent traffic tickets by mail. Intuitively, cameras appear to be a good idea. However, **comprehensive studies conclude cameras actually increase crashes and injuries, providing a safety argument not to install them.**

Legislation to permit camera citations has been proposed [in Florida] since the 1990s, but none has passed to date. This paper explains red light running trends in Florida; effective solutions to reduce red light running; findings from major camera evaluations; examples of flawed evaluations; the automobile insurance financial interest in cameras; and the increased likelihood of even higher crash and injury rates if cameras are used in Florida due to the high percent of elderly drivers and passengers.