

RED-LIGHT CAMERAS DO NOT REDUCE ACCIDENTS

These summaries from five independent research studies prove beyond a shadow of doubt that red-light cameras (RLC) actually increase the risk of accidents at intersections, thus debunking the propaganda that these devices are installed for safety. The hard evidence shows that they are used for revenue-raising.

A Long Term Study of Red-Light Cameras and Accidents David Andreassen Australian Road Research Board February 1995

This study examined the long term effect on accident types of red-light cameras at 41 signalised intersections in Melbourne Australia. The cameras were installed in 1984 and reported accidents for the period 1979 to 1989 were used in the detailed analysis.

Quotes from the study:

“The results of this study suggest that the installation of the RLC at these sites did not provide any reduction in accidents, rather there has been increases in rear end and adjacent approaches accidents on a before and after basis and also by comparison with the changes in accidents at intersection signals.”

“There has been no demonstrated value of the RLC as an effective countermeasure.”

The Impact of Red-light Cameras (Photo-Red Enforcement) on Crashes in Virginia Virginia Transportation Research Council June 2007

The Virginia Transportation Research Council released a report expanding upon earlier research into the safety effects of red-light cameras in Virginia. Despite showing an increase in crashes, this study was instrumental in the return of red-light cameras to the state of Virginia. With a proven negative safety impact, the clear incentive to bring back the cameras was money.

Quotes from the study:

“After cameras were installed, rear-end crashes increased for the entire six-jurisdiction study area. After controlling for time and traffic volume at each intersection, rear-end crash rates increased by an average of 27% for the entire study area.”

“After cameras were installed, total crashes increased.”

“The impact of cameras on injury severity is too close to call.”

“Based only on the study results presented herein and without referencing other studies, the study did not show a definitive safety benefit associated with camera installation with regard to all crash types, all crash severities and all crash jurisdictions.”

The Red-Light Running Crisis: Is It Intentional? Office of the Majority Leader US House of Representatives May 2001

This report was prepared by former House Majority Leader Dick Armey's staff. It looks at the problems of red-light cameras and how to really deal with traffic-light violations.

Quoted from the study:

“And one should ask the question, if there's a problem with an intersection, why don't safety engineers in the field just go out and fix the timing?”

In fact, before red-light cameras arrived in the United States, that's exactly what our regulations instructed them to do. If too many people enter on red at an intersection, engineers were supposed to lengthen its yellow time. But in the year that red-light cameras first started collecting millions in revenue on our shores, those entrusted with developing our traffic safety regulations dropped the requirement to fix signal timing, instructing engineers to “use enforcement” instead.

Indeed, according to the Federal Highway Administration, these problem intersections serve as a great location to hold a press conference. The agency offers a script for local officials to exploit a tragically mistimed intersection to call for the installation of additional red-light cameras and tout their safety benefits.

But none of the reports that are supposed to tell us that red-light cameras are responsible safety benefits actually say that. First, they dismiss increases in rear-end collisions associated with red-light cameras as “non-significant,” despite evidence to the contrary. Second, they do not actually look at red-light intersection accidents. The latest accident study in Oxnard, California, for example, only documents accident reductions “associated with” - not caused by - red-light cameras. Although that statement has little scientific value, it does have great marketing appeal if you don’t look too closely.

Every study claiming red-light cameras increase safety is written by the same man. Before joining the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS), he was a top transportation official in New York City at the time the city began looking into becoming the first jurisdiction in the country to install red-light cameras. In other words, the father of the red-light camera in America is the same individual offering the “objective” testimony that they are effective.

A similar conflict of interest affects those entrusted with writing safety regulations for our traffic lights. The Institute of Transportation Engineers is actively involved in lobbying for, and even drafting legislation to implement, red-light cameras. They are closely tied to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS), which in turn is funded by companies that stand to profit handsomely any time points are assessed to a driver’s licence.

In short, the only documented benefit to red-light cameras is to the pocketbook of local governments who use the devices to collect millions in revenue.”

Investigation Of Crash Risk Reduction Resulting From Red-Light Cameras In Small Urban Areas
Mark Burkey PhD and Kofi Obeng PhD
North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University
July 2004

A study prepared by the North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University’s Urban Transit Institute for the United States Department of Transportation.

“Using a large data set, including 26 months before the introduction of RLCs, we analyse reported accidents occurring near 303 intersections over a 57-month period, for a total of 17,271 observations. Employing maximum likelihood estimation of Poisson regression models, we find that:

The results do not support the view that red-light cameras reduce crashes. Instead, we find that RLCs are associated with higher levels of many types and severity categories of crashes.”

Evaluation of the Red-Light-Camera-Enforcement Pilot Project
Ontario Ministry of Transportation
December 2003

This report from Ontario, Canada’s Ministry of Transportation’s concluded that jurisdictions using photo enforcement experienced an overall increase in property damage and fatal and injury rear-end collisions. The report also concludes that there was an overall reduction in serious accidents and angle collisions. However, a closer look at the data found in this government-sponsored report show that intersections monitored by cameras experienced, overall, a 2% increase in fatal and injury collisions compared to a decrease of 12.7% in the camera-free intersections that were used as a control group.

In fact, the non-camera intersections fared better than the camera intersections in every accident category.

Quoted from the study:

“Exhibit 2 indicates the red-light running treatments have:

- * Contributed to a 4.9% increase in fatal and injury rear-end collisions and
- * Contributed to a 49.9% increase in property damage only rear-end collisions.

The rear-end collision results are similar to findings in other red-light camera studies.”