

Frequently Asked Questions

What exactly does “photo enforcement” mean?

“Photo enforcement” is a law enforcement technology agencies can use to enforce existing traffic safety laws. It enables officers to monitor, detect and deter dangerous driving behaviors, such as red-light running, speeding, illegally passing a stopped school bus or crossing railroad tracks while the crossing signal is active.

How long has photo enforcement been around?

Law enforcement agencies in the United States have relied on photo enforcement to decrease dangerous driving behaviors since the late 1990s. Redflex Traffic Systems introduced the nation’s first photo enforcement program in Paradise Valley, Ariz. in 1997, which monitored speeding and red light incidents. The program continues to operate today.

Photo enforcement has been used internationally to improve roadway safety since the 1960s.

When should photo enforcement be used?

Photo enforcement is designed for use on roadways with a history of crashes or violations resulting from dangerous driving behaviors, such as red-light running, speeding or illegally passing a stopped school bus. It should be considered once all other safety options have been analyzed, implemented and/or optimized. For instance, prior to the installation of a photo enforcement system, intersections and roadways should be well designed from a safety standpoint, speed limits should be set to the appropriate level for the roadway and yellow-light timing should be reviewed. If the danger still exists after all appropriate safety options have been optimized, photo enforcement could help curb the problem.

What are the benefits of photo enforcement?

- **Automatic Detection:** Photo enforcement cameras are fully automated. No action is required by an officer at the scene to trigger or activate the system.
- **24/7 Deterrent:** The presence of photo enforcement causes drivers to think twice before initiating any risky maneuvers. The camera systems serve as deterrents to breaking the law, 24/7.
- **Police Force Multiplier:** Photo enforcement programs serve as “police force multipliers” enabling local officers to refocus their energies on high-priority tasks while still ensuring the safety and security of problematic intersections.
- **Crash Prevention:** Photo enforcement programs help prevent crashes. Thereby reducing traffic delays and resource allocation by police, fire and EMT resources. More importantly, automated enforcement cameras save lives. According to National Highway Traffic Safety Administration an average of 89 people died each day in motor vehicle crashes in 2011 – an average of one every 16 minutes.

How does photo enforcement work?

Photo enforcement is an automated technology law enforcement agencies can use to detect and record dangerous driving behaviors. Typically, a camera system monitors approaching traffic. The system is only triggered to capture data of a vehicle – including a close-up image of the license plate, date and time of incident and lane number – if a potential violation is detected.

All data is transmitted and encrypted to a secure central processing center and digitally signed, preventing interception and manipulation of the evidence while ensuring the highest level of protection to the chain of custody.

Following a comprehensive review process, law enforcement agencies are provided with secure evidence packages. A local officer reviews and approves the evidence to determine if a violation is warranted.

All photo enforcement systems are compliant with local, state and federal laws.

Is photo enforcement really effective?

Photo enforcement is one of the most effective deterrents available, and it is among the only practical means of holding violators accountable on a 24/7 basis. A sampling of studies supporting effectiveness includes:

- The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety conducted one of the most comprehensive studies assessing the effectiveness of red light photo enforcement in 2011. It found a 24% reduction in fatalities across 14 cities with red light camera programs operating from 2004 to 2008. Had similar programs been operating in all large cities during that period, 815 deaths could have been prevented.
- Research from the Texas Transportation Institute in 2011 suggested red light cameras helped reduce the number of crashes at intersections where they were installed. Researchers said the findings demonstrated automated enforcement offers an effective means of preventing crash-related deaths and injuries.
- A 2012 report from the New Jersey Department of Transportation found right-angle crashes were down 86 percent at two of Newark's most dangerous intersections (total crashes down 57 percent) two years after the implementation of a red light camera program.
- Speed camera programs in three municipalities (District of Columbia, Scottsdale, AZ, Montgomery County, MD) contributed to a 70% to 88% decline of drivers traveling more than 10 mph faster than posted speed limits (Insurance Institute for Highway Safety).
- Maryland's SafeZones program – a speed camera program designed to safeguard roadside workers against speeding vehicles – contributed to an 80% reduction in speed camera violations and a 10-year low in work-zone-related crashes and fatalities (2012).

I heard photo enforcement is an invasion of privacy. Is that true?

Photo enforcement does not constitute an invasion of privacy, and numerous courts around the country have upheld this view. When drivers' receive their licenses, they agree to abide by traffic laws on public roadways that are intended to protect their safety and the safety of others.

Further, any data captured by a photo enforcement camera is only used for law enforcement purposes.

Are photo enforcement cameras recording and saving all activity 24/7/365?

No, photo enforcement cameras continually monitor traffic, but they are only triggered to capture and save data if a potential violation is detected.

Records of violations are only kept for a specified duration established by the respective law enforcement or government agency.

What exactly are the cameras capturing?

Photo enforcement systems are set to capture data specified by the law enforcement agency within local, state and federal guidelines. This data may include photographic stills and video of the vehicle, the license plate, and in some cases, the driver. It can also include the date, time, location, speed and lane number of the incident.

Is the data captured by photo enforcement cameras really secure?

Yes, all data is transmitted and encrypted to a secure central processing server and digitally signed, preventing interception and manipulation of the evidence while ensuring the highest level of protection to the chain of custody. All original images and data are secured in a data vault for safekeeping.

How much does photo enforcement cost taxpayers?

In most cases, photo enforcement systems are "cost neutral," which means the monies collected from citations originating from photo enforcement can fully fund the programs. Additionally, taxpayers do not front any costs for the system installation.

Who is responsible for issuing tickets?

The local law enforcement agency is the only entity that can determine if a citation is warranted. Redflex provides officers with secure, comprehensive evidence packages that offer the situational awareness needed to assess whether a ticket should be issued.

What happens when a driver gets a ticket resulting from a photo enforcement violation?

A photo enforcement violation is treated just like any other traffic violation. The driver will be required to contest or pay the citation. Instructions for both options are relayed with the ticket.