PhotoRED Program Enforcement FAQs

1. Do red light running cameras really reduce crashes at intersections?

Red Light Photo Enforcement reduces crashes at monitored intersections by approximately 40%. The technology tends to produce generalized changes in driver behavior, so violations and crashes decline throughout the area where cameras are used, not just at the specific intersections equipped with cameras. (Insurance Institute for Highway Safety; IIHS, 2002)

2. Why doesn’t the Police Department use existing personnel for this enforcement?

In the past six years, red light violations have accounted for as much as 6% of the total traffic summonses issued by officers in the county. Arlington County Police officers issued 3,197 red light violation summonses in 2007, and 2,223 red light violation summonses in 2008. Cameras act as a force multiplier for the Police Department. The cameras will contribute to public safety at their designated locations 24 hours a day and leave police officers free to address other community issues.

3. If ticketing drivers reduces crashes, why doesn’t the Arlington County Police Department enforce more red light running violations?

Cameras reduce the danger of red light enforcement to officers and the public. Officers trying to enforce red light violations may have to travel against traffic, increasing the likelihood of a collision. The police department does not have enough officers to enforce every intersection 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. The camera has the ability to capture violations in the absence of officers.

4. Do cameras photograph every vehicle passing through an intersection?

No. Cameras are set so that only those vehicles that enter the intersection after the light has turned red are photographed. Vehicles entering the intersection on yellow and are still in the intersection when the light turns red are not photographed. The camera system only takes pictures when a violation occurs.

5. What kind of violation will be issued and what would the fine be?

Virginia State Code 15.2-968.1 mandates the violation as a driver responsibility. It is presumed that the owner of the vehicle was the driver at the time of the violation. Red light violations are handled similar to a parking violation. There is no insurance liability and no DMV implication or points associated with the driver or owner of the vehicle. By law, the civil fine cannot exceed $50.
6. How will I know which intersections have red light cameras?

Legislation enacted by the 2007 General Assembly requires that localities place conspicuous signs within 500 feet of the intersection where a red light running camera is installed. Localities also are required to conduct a public awareness program advising the public that a photo enforcement system is being implemented or expanded. All intersections are listed on the PhotoRED information web page.

Eastbound Lee Highway at North Lynn Street  
Southbound Ft. Myer Drive at westbound Lee Highway  
Northbound North Glebe Road at Fairfax Drive  
Westbound Lee Highway at Washington Boulevard

7. What happens when a funeral procession or emergency vehicle continues through a red light at an intersection that it is photo enforced?

Special circumstances such as a funeral processions, anything under police direction, or such things that are authorized by statue will not be issued a citation. Emergency vehicle generated violations (Police, Fire, EMS) will be reviewed by officers in the interest of public safety. All violations are screened and reviewed individually before a determination of a violation of law or policy is made.

8. Who will determine what constitutes a violation?

All violations are reviewed and certified by a Special Police Officer who is directly overseen by an Arlington County Police supervisor. Any vehicle that enters an intersection, including the crosswalks, after the light has turned red is in violation and subject to fine.

10. Isn’t the main purpose of red light cameras to make money?

No. The objective of the PhotoRED enforcement program is to improve intersection safety. Signs and publicity campaigns required by the 2007 General Assembly warn motorists that photo enforcement is in use. Revenue is generated by fines paid by drivers who continue to run red lights. Fines for red light violations in Virginia are limited to $50 per violation by legislation. Independent audits of red light camera enforcement across the country have found that these programs generally do not generate excess revenue. Camera equipment costs vary based on the type of camera, the complexity of the intersection, and technical requirements. A typical red light camera system with installation, maintenance, and monitoring costs more than $100,000. Arlington County will incur limited financial liability (no upfront costs) and will maintain a “cost neutral” program. The monetary impact to the county is a fixed monthly fee paid to the camera company. The camera company does not get paid on a per ticket basis. Arlington County tax payers and law abiding (or safe drivers) will not absorb the cost of the automated systems. In short, the violators alone will pay for the cameras.

11. Does the system enforce running right turns on red?
Yes. Virginia law requires all vehicles to stop on a red light signal. Right turns on red are permitted unless otherwise posted. The camera will capture right turn violations on vehicles that proceed without coming to a full stop. The sensors will detect violations in the right turn lanes being monitored and activate the photo enforcement system. Officers will review each captured offense and determine if the vehicle stopped and proceeded safely and in accordance with Virginia law.

12. What happens if my vehicle is caught running a red light?

The photo enforcement system captures the violation. The contracted company reviews and validates the violation and sends it to the police department. A special police officer reviews the evidence captured by the system and either accepts the violation for civil penalty or dismisses the violation due to circumstances that are either acquired by the monitoring system or observed in the video evidence. If the officer accepts the violation, he or she will then obtain the vehicle owner’s information for mailing of the notice and $50 fine. The information will be sent to ATS, who will then send the notice to the register owner. The owner of the vehicle will receive the violation notice in the mail with instructions for viewing the violation.

13. How do I review the violation and pay the fine?

You will be provided with three still photographs of your vehicle on the printed violation notice. You may also view your images and video online at www.ViolationInfo.com. The fastest and easiest way to pay your Notice is to pay online with a credit card. Go to www.ViolationInfo.com and logon with your Notice # and Pin #. Click the Pay button. The owner/driver can also arrange for an opportunity to meet with a PhotoRED program officer to review the evidence and discuss the red light running violation. Lastly, the vehicle owner/driver can request a court date for the evidence to be heard in the Arlington County General District Traffic Court. The court arrangements will be made by a PhotoRED officer.

14. Does Arlington County have a local ordinance as required by Virginia State Code 15.2-968.1?

Yes, Arlington County Code amended the Motor Vehicle Code and added section 14.2-23.1 which authorizes the use of red-light photo monitoring systems.

15. Why does Arlington County give drivers a 30-day red light running warning period at the location where a camera system is activated?

Red light running is a violation of the law at every signalized intersection in Arlington County. The warning period only applies to the use of the automated enforcement camera system. The 30-day warning period is considered a part of the public awareness process for implementing or expanding the automated enforcement program.
16. What happens if an officer issues a summons to the driver of a vehicle and the red light camera also captures the vehicle during the red light running violation?

An officer’s summons takes precedence over the camera violation citation. The officer will identify and issue the summons to the driver.

17. What happens when the camera captures a commercial motor vehicle or a vehicle that is owned by a company or state or local agency that has a fleet of vehicles?

The violation notice is mailed to the registered owner the same as any other vehicle.

18. What if I still have additional questions?

Contact the Special Operations Section by phone at (703) 228-4141 or by email at PhotoRED@arlingtonva.us.