



**GENERAL QUESTIONS:**

**Q: What is red light running?**

A: A violation occurs when a motorist enters an intersection after the signal light has turned red. Motorists trapped inadvertently in an intersection when the signal changes to red (e.g., waiting to turn left) are not red light runners.

**Q: Why do we need red light photo enforcement in Albemarle County?**

A: Red light running is one of the major causes of collisions, deaths and injuries at signalized intersections in the U.S. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that 20 percent of drivers do not obey intersection signals. Crashes caused by red light running result in more than 800 fatalities and 165,000 injuries each year, according to the NHTSA. The economic impact of red light running on society is estimated to be \$14 billion annually. Other motorists and pedestrians account for nearly half the deaths caused by red light running crashes.

Here in Albemarle County, we also have a major problem with traffic safety at intersections. For example, at the Route 29/Rio Road intersection alone, we experienced 177 crashes in during the three year period from January 2006 to January 2009 and at least 22 of those crashes are directly attributable to red light running.

**Q: What are red light cameras and how do they work?**

A: Red light cameras 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 24/7, and the camera itself is triggered by any vehicle entering the intersection above a pre-established minimum speed and following a specified time after the signal has turned red. A second photograph typically shows the red light violator in the intersection. Cameras record the date, time of day, time elapsed since the beginning of the red signal and vehicle speed. Tickets are sent by mail to owners of the violating vehicles, following a review by trained police officers of the photographic evidence.

**KEY INFORMATION  
ABOUT PHOTOSAFE**

The program will start in November 2010, with a 30 day warning period; active enforcement will begin in December 2010.

PhotoSafe will be located at the intersection of Route 29 and Rio Road.

Violators will be fined \$50.00. Operators of the vehicle will be held responsible and can contest the violation in court.

Only vehicles that enter the intersection after the light turns red will be photographed.



## PhotoSafe in Albemarle County FAQs

**Q: Do red light running cameras really reduce crashes at intersections?**

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

**Q: Isn't it more dangerous for drivers to slam on their brakes if they fear running a red light rather than to simply keep driving?**

A: Red light running technology is designed to photograph only those vehicles entering the intersection after the light has turned red. While drivers who fear a ticket for red light running can cause a rear-end collision by applying their brakes too quickly, these types of accidents are far less dangerous than the typical right-angle collision caused by red light running. This suggests a positive aggregate benefit. A 2007 study of three Iowa communities equipped with red light cameras found no increase in rear-end collisions. A 2005 study in Raleigh, North Carolina, showed a 25 percent reduction in rear-end accidents. Columbus, Ohio experienced an 81 percent decrease in rear-end collisions at its first installed intersections after one year.

**Q: Does Albemarle County have a local ordinance as required by Virginia State Code 15.2-968.1?**

A: Yes. The Board of Supervisors voted on August 5, 2009 to adopt county ordinance 09 9(1) to allow the use of cameras for the purpose of enforcing red light signal violations.

### QUESTIONS ABOUT CAMERA LOCATIONS:

**Q: How will I know which intersections have a red light camera?**

A: Legislation enacted by the 2007 General Assembly requires the localities to place conspicuous signs within 500 feet of the intersection where a red light running cameras 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.

**Q: Why did Albemarle County give drivers a 30-day red light running warning period at the locations where a camera system is activated?**

A: Red light running is a violation of the law at every signalized intersection in Albemarle 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.

**Q: How were intersections selected for this program?**

A: Intersections are chosen based on crash data and violation rate provided by the Albemarle County Police Department to VDOT; the data provided is for a three year period. VDOT reviews all information and conducts a separate study of the requested intersections before giving final approval.



**Q: How is the timing interval determined between the red, yellow, and green traffic lights at an intersection?**

A: VDOT is responsible for determining the traffic light timing intervals. Times at signals are determined based on variables such as the posted speed limit, typical deceleration rates of vehicles, the grade of the road (uphill or downhill), the width of the intersection, and the amount of time it takes a driver to see the yellow signal and react (perception and reaction time). All traffic signal timing has been evaluated, reviewed and approved by VDOT and is in accordance with VDOT guidelines.

### QUESTIONS ABOUT ENFORCEMENT:

**Q: Why doesn't the Police Department use existing personnel for this enforcement?**

A: 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 free officers to address other community issues. 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. Red light cameras are designed to identify traffic law violators without depending on the presence of police officers, allowing communities to focus on other enforcement needs.

**Q: What happens if my vehicle is caught running a red light?**

A: The contracted company reviews and validates the violation and sends the information to the Albemarle County Police Department. A sworn law enforcement officer reviews the evidence captured and either accepts the violation for a civil penalty or dismisses the violation due to circumstances either acquired by the monitoring system or observed in the video evidence. The contracted company will then mail the violation notice to the owner along with instructions for viewing the violation and methods for payment. By state law (15.2-968.1) all records and video of dismissed cases will be purged within two business days by the contracted company.

**Q: Does the system enforce running right turns on red?**

A: 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.

**Q: Do cameras photograph every vehicle passing through an intersection?**

A: 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.**



**Q: What happens when a funeral procession or an emergency vehicle goes through a red light at an intersection which is photo enforced?**

A: Special circumstances such as a funeral procession will be rejected by officers. Emergency vehicle generated violations (Police, Fire, EMS) will be reviewed by a Police Supervisor 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.

**Q: What happens when the camera catches a commercial motor vehicle or a vehicle that is owned by a company or state or local agency that has a fleet of vehicles?**

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

### QUESTIONS ABOUT VIOLATIONS ISSUED:

**Q: What kind of violation will be issued and what will be the fine?**

A: 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 \$50.00.

**Q: Who will determine what constitutes a violation?**

A: All violations are reviewed and certified by a sworn law enforcement officer. Any vehicle that enters an intersection, including the crosswalks, after the light has turned red is in violation and subject to fine.

**Q: What happens if a notice violation is ignored?**

A: A judgment or default judgment entered against summonsed individual results in referral to a collection agency. The contracted company will manage the third party collections process for unpaid violations for the County of Albemarle. Violation data will be electronically sent to the established collection agency 30 days after the entry of judgment. The contracted company works with its business partners to gain the best value for the County. The collection contingency fee for the chosen agency is 15% of the total collected amount, payable by the County. The agency will deposit the net amount (total collected minus contingency fee for amounts collected

**Q: What happens when an officer issues a summons to the driver of a vehicle and the red light cameras also capture the vehicle during the red light running violation?**

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

**Q: What if I want to contest the violation?**

A: Request a Court Hearing. You have the right to a court hearing to contest this summons. Your court date, time, and location are listed in your summons. Failure to appear at the hearing without submitting an Affidavit or paying the \$50.00 penalty in advance may result in your being found liable for the \$50.00 monetary penalty, and may subject you to additional legal actions if payment is not made.



**Q: Can I pay my fines by mail? Online? In person?**

A: Payments can be made either by mail or online, but not in person.

**Q: Where can I go to view my image/video?**

A: Violations can be viewed online at the contracted company's website, by scheduling an appointment with the Albemarle County Police Department or at the public computer kiosk station located at the Central Albemarle County Office Building on McIntire Road.

**Q: I don't believe I ran a red light or was speeding. Can I discuss my case with someone?**

A: Yes, anyone who wishes to discuss their case can do so by contacting the Albemarle County Police Department and scheduling an appointment with the officer that is assigned to the case.