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First of 9 red-light cameras set to start clicking

Posted: May 12, 2008 06:18 PM



AUSTIN, Texas (KXAN) -- Red-light cameras will start clicking at Austin intersections in less than two weeks.

The cameras will be installed at nine intersections across the city selected for having the most red-light runners.

The city announced Monday that the camera at the northbound service road at Interstate 35 and Eleventh Street will be the first to go online. Beginning May 23, the Friday before Memorial Day weekend, the camera will begin snapping photos and video of red-light runners.

The camera only records vehicles that cross the line into the intersection after the light turns red.

"There will be no warning period once the cameras are operational," said Austin City Council Member Jennifer Kim.

There will be no grace period or warning for first-time offenders, just a notice in the mail and a \$75 fine.

Public service announcements will soon air on local TV and radio in an effort to educate drivers about why they're being watched.

"The key message conveyed through these public service announcements is that 'Keep Austin Safe' is just about safety," Kim said.

Fourteen people have been killed in Austin since 2005 because of red-light runners. City leaders said the cameras are about safety, not a way to generate cash.

"If it turned out they were actually working and people were stopping at red lights and they weren't needed anymore, that would be a good thing, a wonderful thing to save lives and prevent accidents," Kim said.

Some studies have shown rear-end collisions increase at intersections where a red-light camera is installed, but David Gerard of Austin Public Works disagreed with those findings.

"When they started looking at the cost of the crashes, there was actually a savings in the number of injuries and fatalities," Gerard said.

The remaining eight cameras that are part of the city's plan will be phased in over the next several months.



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