

Safety Cameras – FAQ

THE LAW

Q1 Is it true that the offence is not valid if the camera isn't yellow?

No. The Government guidelines for high visibility enable the partnership to be eligible to reclaim the operational costs in relation to those offences detected by these cameras. The camera colour does not change the legal status of cameras if you have been caught speeding.

Q2 Speeding is not a serious offence – everybody does it at some time.

Speeding is a very serious and criminal offence. Research and experience confirm that excessive and inappropriate speed is a major contributory factor in collisions that cause death and injury. The purpose of speed safety cameras is to encourage drivers to change their attitude towards speeding and comply with limits at all times.

Q3 Who is responsible for placing safety cameras?

The responsibility for placing safety cameras rests with the local highway authority in consultation with the police. Guidance on camera deployment has been issued by the Department and is contained in Circular Roads 1/92.

Q4 What is a Safety Camera “partnership”?

Areas that have been accepted into the safety camera funding scheme must form partnerships made up of local authorities, the police and courts in order to qualify for payment from conditional offer fixed penalty receipts to cover their costs of safety camera operation.

Q5 If a speeding ticket is ignored, will there be follow up action?

If no response is received, a police officer will call at the registered keeper's address and serve the papers personally. If matters get to this stage a court trial will be the only option where, if found guilty the penalty points and fines can be considerably more severe. Any attempt to give false information will result in criminal proceedings.

Q6 Cameras are often too close to the change in speed limit sign.

Speed should be modified at the start of speed limits. All camera sites are visible from a distance. Once past a speed limit sign you are required to drive at the speed stated (or less, depending on road conditions and environment).

Q7 Why do the police allow drivers to exceed the limit by a significant amount before pulling them over, or triggering the speed enforcement camera?

There is some flexibility in application of the limits to safeguard against possible discrepancies between speedometers and police equipment.

While the police have made it clear that they will not be imposing a zero tolerance strategy, and will continue to use their discretion, they will be seeking greater compliance.

Better utilisation of cameras will allow them to enforce speed limits to the ACPO guidelines, where existing resource constraints may prevent this.

Q8 Why don't police forces set their cameras at the same speed threshold?

It is an operational matter for each chief officer of police to decide at what threshold cameras are set. They have to take account of local circumstances. The Association of Chief Police Officers issued guidelines in February 2000 on the speed thresholds where enforcement begins.

The Principles of Speed Enforcement as stated in the document are as follows:- "The enforcement of traffic law by the police should be guided by the principles of proportionality in applying the law and securing compliance; targeting of enforcement action; consistency of approach; and transparency about what enforcement action is undertaken and why; and recognition that effective partnership with other organisations is essential."

Q9 The police should enforce speed limits without relying on cameras.

Safety camera enforcement is just one way to control speed and the police still have a part to play in slowing traffic. Outside of the funding scheme the police may enforce speed limits using any equipment that has been approved by the Home Office and frequently stop drivers to offer advice about their speed without prosecuting.

RULES

Q1 How many accidents are needed at proposed sites for enforcement in order for cameras to be placed?

The rules for the safety camera netting off scheme have been developed to have the most positive road safety benefits and demand that partnerships should use the guideline of four accidents resulting in people being killed or seriously injured over the previous three years at sites they propose to enforce using cameras. This does not preclude cameras being placed at sites that do not meet the guidelines if they contribute to the overall strategy aimed

at reducing road accident casualties.

Q2 *Why are the rules so restrictive?*

Guidance on safety camera deployment has always made it clear that cameras should only be placed where there is a history of speed related road accidents. Since those forming the partnership are able to use some of the fine revenue to cover their costs involved in camera operation, it is vital camera deployment meets the primary purpose to reduce collisions, deaths and injuries. A detailed set of rules has been devised including the need to conduct an analysis of speeds and casualties prior to the placement of cameras. Experience of the netting off scheme shows quite clearly that the greatest success in reducing death and serious injury results from a strong partnership working towards a common goal.

Q3 *Is there evidence that coloured cameras are more effective than grey ones?*

No studies have been conducted but numerous complaints from drivers have been received that cameras have not been evident. It makes sense that drivers will slow down if they see the camera but might not if they do not.

No firm evidence exists one way or the other on whether or not highly visible cameras obtain better casualty reduction than less visible or hidden cameras. In New Zealand the Government found during trials that hidden cameras were more effective but reverted to visible cameras after the trial, and it is also possible to point to British Columbia in Canada that took the decision to stop entirely speed camera enforcement in the belief it was having no effect on improving road safety. Ministers do not believe either approach is right for the UK.

Q4 *Have visible cameras been accepted by the public?*

The Government believe that if the public understand and accept the deployment of cameras in an open way, they are more likely to respond and reduce their speeds as required. And that is exactly what is happening in the safety camera partnership areas that are participating in netting off. Partnerships must put in place an effective communications strategy to ensure the local people have a clear idea of why and where cameras are being deployed in their area. Experience is showing that this approach is ensuring people recognise and support the use of cameras where appropriate.

SAFETY OR CASH

Q1 *How much money are the Police making from speed cameras?*

The police are not making any money. All monies collected from speeding fines are sent directly to the Lord Chancellor's Department. The Safety

Camera Partnership may claim back only the funds for the operational costs.

Q2 Numerous television programmes and press reports confirm that cameras are placed to raise revenue.

Media reports on safety cameras are often inaccurate or selective. All relevant research indicates very clearly that where cameras are placed at sites or on routes with a history of speed related accidents, the reduction in collisions resulting in death and serious injury is very substantial. Indeed, monitoring of the eight areas that piloted the scheme that allows some fine revenue to be re-invested in camera activity showed a reduction over two years of 35% in those killed and seriously injured at camera sites.

Q3 Is the introduction of more 'safety cameras' (speed and red light cameras) just another stealth tax for motorists?

No. The new system has to meet strict Treasury criteria to prevent revenue from being used for anything other than camera funding. The only people who will be subject to speeding fines will be those that break the law.

Any funding arrangements will only meet the costs of the police, courts and highway authorities. The surplus will go to the Treasury, as does all the existing revenue.

The system ensures that those who place cameras have no incentive to do so for anything other than road safety reasons.

The primary test on the new arrangement is whether it reduces casualties. Evidence from the pilots and an earlier study on camera effectiveness (Home Office, PRG police research series paper 20), is that casualties have reduced significantly both at camera sites and in the areas where cameras have been placed.

Q4 Are cameras not simply another example of "bashing" the motorist?

On the contrary, cameras are of benefit to all people, including motorists. Cameras are already shown to save lives - more effective, targeted use of cameras will save even more lives, many of which will be motorists.

Q5 Catching drivers speeding has become even easier pickings using cameras. Is this not just an easy way for the Government to pass on more costs to drivers when the police should be dealing with other crimes and more serious traffic offences such as dangerous driving?

Speeding and red-light running are very serious crimes and kill and injure thousands of people every year. The only drivers who need fear prosecution are those who break the law and in so doing put additional risk on others and themselves. Law-abiding drivers and other road users, especially pedestrians and cyclists, will welcome this initiative which is intended to make our roads safer for everyone. Since their inception some 10 years ago speed enforcement cameras have proved to be highly effective at reducing speeding and, when sited at dangerous sites or along problem routes, have reduced the number of those killed and seriously injured by up to 35%.

Q6 Isn't this just a measure to generate revenue for the police?

No. There remains a great deal of mis-reporting of this in the press. The application of the receipts will be strictly controlled, on a scheme-by-scheme and an area-by-area basis. They will be used to meet only the costs of the agencies involved in operating the cameras and the related administrative activities. Additional funds in excess of the costs of operating the cameras will be paid into the Treasury Consolidated Fund.

THE SAFETY CAMERA FUNDING (NETTING OFF) SYSTEM

Q1 Why are some cameras hidden?

It is not in the interests of local authorities or the police to place cameras that have no effect on reducing casualties. Those areas participating in the scheme that allows some fixed penalty fine revenue to be netted off and re-invested in camera activity must comply with certain rules and achieve casualty reductions or risk being suspended from the scheme. Fine revenue for those areas remaining outside the scheme passes to the Treasury. In each case, therefore, it would make no sense to "hide" cameras.

Q2 How can drivers be certain of the speed limit at camera sites?

Rules exist that aim to ensure drivers are warned of the presence of a camera and reminded of the speed limit through signing. These rules operate for the scheme that allows some fine revenue to be netted off and re-invested by partnerships of local authorities, the police and courts to cover the costs of safety camera operation. Netting off currently covers over 30 police force areas and the majority of those not yet taking part are expected to be participating by spring 2003.

Q3 What happens if the scheme is so successful that fewer people speed and there is insufficient revenue to cover the extra camera costs?

If this happens there will be a very significant reduction in the number of people killed and injured on our roads. This will save far more in medical and social costs, apart from the misery and suffering that will be saved, than the

loss in revenue. The benefits of camera enforcement could thus be recovered from savings made elsewhere, and corresponding changes to camera funding arrangements could then be made. As compliance improves, camera use may be reviewed and scaled down as appropriate.

WHY TARGET SPEED

Q1 Why is the government so concerned about speed when deaths on the road have fallen so sharply over the last 30 years?

Success at tackling other road safety issues such as drink/driving and the fitting and wearing of seat belts have contributed enormously to reducing road deaths. In more recent years the use of speed reducing measures such as road humps and the creation of 20 mph zones have resulted in a reduction in casualties. But we need to continue to tackle excessive speed and the proper use of safety cameras has shown that they will remain important at continuing the downward trend in casualties.

Q2 Isn't the 70 mph motorway speed limit out of date? Should it be raised given the improvement in road and vehicle design since the limit was introduced in the 1960s?

Given the proven relationship between increases in speed and the number and severity of accidents, to do so might increase the risk of death and serious injury. Enforcement of the limit at higher levels would be very difficult and the greater leeway in speeds allowed would certainly result in more collisions. Motorways are our safest roads and the Government intend to ensure they stay as such.

Q3 Why the obsession with excessive speed? Surely it is only the incorrect and irresponsible misuse of speed, which can kill?

It is necessary to reduce both excessive and inappropriate speeds. Cameras are highly effective at treating the former; other measures such as traffic calming features are used to tackle inappropriate speeds.

CAMERAS - WHY AND HOW

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Q1 Why not try other methods of slowing drivers down, such as better speed limit signs, traffic calming, driver education and publicity?

Cameras are not the only means of slowing drivers, but they are effective in the right circumstances.

Q2 *There are many road safety issues more important than speeding, why is the Government not tackling these?*

Safety cameras and speed enforcement are not the only important road safety issues. Proposals and commitments in respect of other road safety matters are addressed in the Government's strategy "Tomorrow's Roads - Safer for Everyone", which was published in 2000. The strategy can be obtained free from PO Box 236, Wetherby, LS23 7NB (and is available on the DfT web site).

SPEED ENFORCEMENT DETECTION DEVICES (SEDD)

Q1 *What is the Government's position on the use of SEDD in motor vehicles?*

We believe drivers who purchase SEDD do so primarily to avoid being caught speeding. It is our belief that drivers should stay within speed limits at all times. Not just in areas where they think they will be caught.

Q2 *Is it true that the Government intends to ban devices for warning drivers of cameras and other enforcement devices, so called radar and laser detectors and diffusers?*

The DfT has conducted a consultation exercise on whether to ban the installation and use of speed enforcement detector devices in motor vehicles. Officials are currently considering the responses to the consultation and an announcement will be made when Ministers have decided how to proceed.

Q3 *Aren't SEDD a legitimate road safety device?*

There are varying types of SEDD available on the market. The most objectionable SEDD will deflect the safety camera beam thus allowing the drivers to continue to speed undetected. There can be no defence for devices such as these.

It is our belief that a SEDD could only be described as a road safety device if it contained details of speed limits, thus enabling the driver to stay within speed limits at all times and not just in those areas where there is a likelihood of being caught.