

INSURANCE INSTITUTE FOR HIGHWAY SAFETY

NEWS RELEASE

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RED LIGHT RUNNING FACTORS INTO MORE THAN 800 DEATHS ANNUALLY; MORE THAN HALF OF THOSE WHO DIE ARE HIT BY RED LIGHT VIOLATORS

ARLINGTON, VA – Each year more than 800 people die and an estimated 200,000-plus are injured in crashes that involve red light running. Total deaths in such crashes numbered almost 6,000 during 1992-98. More than half of these deaths were pedestrians and occupants in other vehicles who were hit by the red light runners. Another 2,779 deaths occurred in the vehicles running the red lights. During the same time period (1992-98), about 1,500,000 people were injured in such crashes.

"This traffic safety problem deserves more attention than it has received," says Ed Rust Jr., chairman of the Institute and CEO of State Farm. "Red light running is more than just a form of aggressive driving. People are dying and getting hurt needlessly because of it."

Camera enforcement: Nationwide, fatal crashes at traffic signals increased 18 percent during 1992-98, more than three times the rate of increase for all other fatal crashes during the same time. Because red light running is a big part of the problem, the Institute has been studying the effectiveness of red light camera programs. The cameras, which are being used to enforce traffic laws in about 40 U.S. communities, photograph vehicles whose drivers deliberately run red lights. Violators then are ticketed by mail. Such programs reduce red light running by about 40 percent, Institute research has found.

Cameras have been used with success outside the United States, but in some U.S. jurisdictions there has been opposition to cameras because of perceived privacy concerns. "This should be a nonissue," Institute president Brian O'Neill says. "Red light runners have no right to jeopardize others and then hide their violations behind privacy claims. Public officials should be concerned with protecting innocent people from being killed or injured by red light runners rather than protecting the privacy of people who break the law."

Geographic variation: Arizona has a far higher rate of fatal red light running crashes than other states (see attachment) and, in response, has begun camera enforcement in several cities. Three of the four cities with the highest rates of fatal red light running crashes are in Arizona. Rates in Nevada, Michigan, Texas, Alabama, and New Mexico also are high.

End 1-page release on fatal red light running crashes
1-page attachment: geographic variation by city, state

