

Photo-Enforcement Cameras and Installation Structures must be Removed when Not In Use

1. After a red-light camera program ends, some jurisdictions try to keep their cameras up at intersections. Behind the scenes, know that the red-light camera vendor is pushing to keep their cameras up so that the vendor can make an “After Red-light Cameras are Turned Off, Red-Light Running Increases” report, then push the jurisdiction to turn them on again. Just remember that all “studies” produced by red-light camera firms are engineering malpractice. The reports retain the false narrative that red-light running is caused by bad drivers, not bad engineering.
2. In my experience, only about 20% of the time a jurisdiction will try to keep them up.
3. The *Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices* (MUTCD) is very clear that unused traffic control devices should be removed. The principle is stated clearly in **2C.02**.
4. The MUTCD is a federal regulation. NY adopts it as law so that NY can get federal funding for its highways.
5. **Standards** must be adopted. **Guidance** is recommended but not required by law.
6. **1A.08 (03)** is a **Standard**. After the red-light camera program ends, red-light cameras and their signs are no longer supported by laws, ordinances, or regulations.
7. Photo-enforcement signs are regulatory traffic control devices. A “regulatory” traffic control device is one that if you do not heed it, you break the law. As opposed to an information sign, like “Rest Area Ahead”.
8. A red-light camera is not officially a “traffic control device” in the MUTCD. The MUTCD states that the red-light camera’s warning and regulatory signs are, but makes no statement about the camera itself. There are politics underlying this argument.

To counter the argument “Red light cameras are not traffic control devices and therefore we can leave them up”, you respond, “If red light cameras do not control traffic in any way; that is, they do not change driver behavior, then why did you put them up in the first place?” That flusters a city councilman every time. Even traffic engineers cannot respond to that. In North Carolina, traffic engineers acknowledge they are traffic control devices. When the dozens of cities that had red light cameras terminated their programs, the traffic engineers immediately put bags over the cameras the day after the program terminated. A few days later, all the cameras and poles were gone.

9. **4D.01(03)** is a **Standard**. In systems engineering, the red-light camera / traffic control signal is part of a single system of systems (an SOS). The camera changes the behavior of how drivers respond to a traffic control signal. It is an extension of the traffic control signal.
10. The cameras cannot be repurposed as some sort of surveillance device. Surveillance devices are simple webcams that sit on top of a traffic signal. The cameras are traffic control devices. The public knows their appearance. Their underlying functionality is triggered by red-light running.
11. **2C.02(01)** is a **Standard**. This little requirement states that a licensed professional engineer must certify a red-light camera installation plan. All jurisdictions put up warning signs that a red-light camera is at the next intersection. The warning signs alone require an “engineering” study. Any time the MUTCD invokes the word “engineering” study, that means a PE must take responsible charge by signing and sealing a plan.

MUTCD 2009 Edition Revision 3-July 2022

Section 1A.04 Placement and Operation of Traffic Control Devices

Guidance:

03 Unnecessary traffic control devices should be removed. The fact that a device is in good physical condition should not be a basis for deferring needed removal or change.

Section 1A.08 Authority for Placement of Traffic Control Devices

Standard:

01 Traffic control devices, advertisements, announcements, and other signs or messages within the highway right-of-way shall be placed only as authorized by a public authority or the official having jurisdiction, or, in the case of private roads open to public travel, by the private owner or private official having jurisdiction, for the purpose of regulating, warning, or guiding traffic.

03 All regulatory traffic control devices shall be supported by laws, ordinances, or regulations.

Section 2C.02 Application of Warning Signs

Standard:

01 The use of warning signs shall be based on an engineering study or on engineering judgment.

Guidance:

02 The use of warning signs should be kept to a minimum as the unnecessary use of warning signs tends to breed disrespect for all signs. In situations where the condition or activity is seasonal or temporary, the warning sign should be removed or covered when the condition or activity does not exist.

Section 4D.01 General

Standard:

03 When a traffic control signal is not in operation, such as before it is placed in service, during seasonal shutdowns, or when it is not desirable to operate the traffic control signal, the signal faces shall be covered, turned, or taken down to clearly indicate that the traffic control signal is not in operation.