

INTRADEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE

February 16, 2011
16.2

TO: The Honorable Board of Police Commissioners

FROM: Chief of Police

SUBJECT: INQUIRY FROM THE BOARD OF POLICE COMMISSIONERS
REGARDING THE NUMBER OF REAR-END TRAFFIC COLLISIONS
OCCURRING AT PHOTO RED LIGHT INTERSECTIONS

BACKGROUND

At the Board of Police Commissioner's (Board) meeting on December 14, 2010, a discussion was held regarding the Department's response to the City Controller's Audit of the Photo Red Light (PRL) Program, Council File (CF) No. 10-1502. During the discussion, the Board requested that the Department report on the following:

- The number of rear-end traffic collisions occurring at PRL intersections.

An analysis of traffic statistics provided by the traffic division was conducted by Emergency Operations Division (EOD) has shown a decrease in traffic collisions at PRL intersections. In 2008, 43 collisions at the City's PRL intersections were caused from "Following Too Closely" (Section 21703, California Vehicle Code). In 2009, there were 41 such collisions, which represents a 4.7 percent decrease. In 2009, 25 PRL intersections showed a decrease in these types of collisions, while the other seven showed a minor increase.

- **Note:** These statistics encompass a half-block radius around the intersection.

If you have any questions regarding this matter, please contact Captain Thomas J. McDonald, Commanding Officer, EOD, at (213) 486-0680.

Respectfully,



CHARLIE BECK
Chief of Police

Attachment

FACT SHEET

INQUIRY FROM THE BOARD OF POLICE COMMISSIONERS REGARDING THE NUMBER OF REAR-END TRAFFIC COLLISIONS OCCURRING AT PRL INTERSECTIONS February 16, 2011

BACKGROUND

At the Board of Police Commissioner's meeting on December 14, 2010, to discuss the Department's response to the City Controller's Audit of the Photo Red Light (PRL) Program, Council File (CF) No. 10-1502, Commissioner Alan Skobin requested that the Department report on the following:

- The number of rear-end traffic collisions occurring at PRL intersections.

SUMMARY

Existing research indicates that PRL camera systems usually result in measurable safety improvements due to a resultant change in driver behavior. While there is usually a significant decrease in the more severe right-angle collisions, some studies have shown that there can occasionally be a slight increase in the less severe rear-end collisions caused by drivers who suddenly slam on their brakes. This study was published in the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration Journal *Automated Enforcement: A Compendium of Worldwide Evaluations of Results*, dated September 2007.

This rear-end trend, however, has not been seen at the City's PRL intersections. This could be due, at least in part, to the placement of the required warning signs well before the intersection, giving drivers ample notice of the existence of PRL cameras which decreases the chance of sudden braking. The City's decision to extend the yellow time beyond the legally required limits may also have contributed to the prevention of the rear-end increases that are seen in other cities.

TRAFFIC STATISTICS

An analysis conducted by Emergency Operations Division from traffic statistics provided by the traffic divisions has shown a decrease in traffic collisions at PRL intersections. From January 2004 to December 2009, red-light collisions at PRL intersections have decreased by 63 percent. Additionally, there has been an overall decrease of 10 percent in all types of collisions, and no red light related fatalities since program activation (compared to five fatalities in the three years prior to PRL enforcement from January 2004 to December 2006).

FACT SHEET

INQUIRY FROM THE BOARD OF POLICE COMMISSIONERS REGARDING THE NUMBER OF REAR-END TRAFFIC COLLISIONS OCCURRING AT PRL INTERSECTIONS

February 16, 2011

In 2008, 43 collisions at the City's PRL intersections were caused from "Following Too Closely" (Section 21703, California Vehicle Code). In 2009, there were 41 such collisions, which represents a 4.7 percent decrease. In this time period, 25 PRL intersections showed a decrease in these type of collisions, while the other seven showed a minor increase.

- **Note:** These statistics encompass a half-block radius around the intersection.

Based on the volume of vehicles that travel through these 32 intersections on a daily basis (two million vehicles a day), these statistical changes over a year period are relatively minor.

CONCLUSION

The PRL Program has not experienced a significant increase in rear-end collisions. The Department, along with the Los Angeles Department of Transportation, will continue to monitor traffic collision trends to ensure that the PRLP is meeting Department goals.

The PRL Program has proven to have a positive impact on public safety.

Prepared by:
Emergency Operations Division