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**Officials admit yellow-light oversight**

**BPD says it won't cave on tickets despite city's failure to adjust signal**

By **JAMES BURGER**, Californian staff writer  
e-mail: [jburger@bakersfield.com](mailto:jburger@bakersfield.com)

Posted: Monday December 20th, 2004, 11:15 PM  
Last Updated: Monday December 20th, 2004, 11:37 PM

The city of Bakersfield has another red-light camera problem. But if drivers want their tickets dismissed this time, they're gonna have to fight for it.



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It's at the same intersection where more than 300 drivers were given invalid tickets this summer because required warning signs hadn't been installed.

This time city officials said they didn't notice a change in state rules that required them to extend the duration of the yellow light at Ming Avenue and South Real Road by four-tenths of a second to 3.9 seconds.

They didn't catch it for two months -- between May 14 and July 20. In that time 1,409 tickets were issued to drivers who had run a red light, said Bakersfield police Detective Mary DeGeare.

Four-tenths of a second isn't long.

"From a practical standpoint, it's totally undetectable," said city traffic engineer Steve Walker. "The ones that are running the red light aren't running it inadvertently."

But it's been enough for a number of people to have the tickets dismissed.

Walker said the city didn't notice the law had changed and the yellow lights needed to be retimed for a couple of months.

But Kern County traffic judges have already disagreed with Walker that the four-tenths of a second is insignificant. They have dismissed a number of tickets because the yellow light timing was not up to state standards.

DeGeare said 20 to 25 drivers have fought the tickets.

In a few cases, the violations were flagrant and the judge ruled against the defendant, she said.

In September, when the city discovered the sign snafu might have invalidated a number of tickets, pol

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get all the ticketed drivers their money back and their driving records cleared.

But the Bakersfield Police Department isn't backing down and handing out ticket refunds this time.

Drivers who got tickets in the mail for violations at Ming and South Real between May 14 and July 20 to court and fight their tickets.

"We feel that the citations were issued in good faith," DeGeare said. "It doesn't prevent a red-light violation the yellow light as a defense. But they'd have to present their case in court."

**[REDACTED]** a vocal critic of red-light cameras in California and who runs an anti-camera Web site, said cases should be overturned.

"They should have brought their system up to date when the law changed. The people ran the light too short," he said. "Illegally short."

Terry McNally, the top administrative officer for Kern County Superior Court, said individuals who got into running a red light at the intersection during the period when the yellow light was too short can still fight

They just need to file a case with the court.

"If they've already paid and admitted guilt, that presents something of a quandary," he said. "It would be a judge."

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### DIGEST

**Date:** November 13, 2004

**Publication:** Bakersfield Californian, The (CA)

**Section:** Local

**Words:** 767

**Page:** b3

City announces sixth red light camera, at Oak and California

Bakersfield's sixth red light traffic camera is up and snapping photos at the intersection of Oak Street and California Avenue.

City officials announced it was operational Friday.

The cameras snap photos of drivers who run red lights, police issue citations based on the photos and the driver is mailed a ticket.

The city's camera system was troubled recently after camera installers forgot to put up signs to warn...

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### Some likely to see red over clearing red light tickets

**Author:** JAMES BURGER, Californian staff writere-mail: [jburger@bakersfield.com](mailto:jburger@bakersfield.com)

**Date:** November 2, 2004

**Publication:** Bakersfield Californian, The (CA)

**Section:** Local

**Words:** 743

**Page:** b1

Most Bakersfield drivers snared by a red light camera that didn't have required warning signs are getting ticket refunds in the mail.

But a few others will have to appeal to Kern County Superior Court for a hearing and argue their case before a court officer to get the same deal.

More than 300 people paid traffic tickets issued improperly by the Bakersfield Police Department in May after city cameras snapped pictures of them running red lights at the intersection of Ming Avenue and...

[Click here for complete article](#)

### No sympathy for red-light violators

**Date:** September 15, 2004

**Publication:** Bakersfield Californian, The (CA)

**Section:** Editorial Page

**Words:** 468

**Page:** B6

Refund is ludicrous

I read about the Bakersfield Police Department giving back \$76,000-plus because signs were not posted at some red-light camera intersections which would have been put there presumably to warn drivers not to break the law.

This is ludicrous! If I'm a bank robber and I rob the Bank of America, does that mean I don't have to give the money back because there was no sign posted on the bank warning me that I would be in violation of the law if I robbed it? People ...

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## No sympathy for red light violators

**Date:** September 12, 2004  
**Publication:** Bakersfield Californian, The (CA)  
**Section:** Editorial Page  
**Words:** 374  
**Page:** B10

Red light means stop

Things that make you say: What? Let's start with the red light runners and a refund. What? Hello! They were caught red handed running a red light and now they are getting a refund because there was not a sign posted. Hello!

Do the officers out there put up a sign when they are setting around a corner looking for speeders? No!

The red light is not there just to give the city a little color, people. It's there to control traffic. It means: stop!

Next...  
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## Red-light ticket snafu leaves police red-faced

**Author:** JAMES BURGER, Californian staff writere-mail:  
 jburger@bakersfield.com  
**Date:** September 4, 2004  
**Publication:** Bakersfield Californian, The (CA)  
**Section:** A Section  
**Words:** 850  
**Page:** A1

Bakersfield police improperly levied \$77,900 in red-light traffic ticket fines on 292 drivers in May, police and court officials said Friday.

After being contacted by The Californian about the foul-up on Thursday, the Bakersfield Police Department announced in a press release Friday that people who had paid the fines would get their money back.

City traffic cameras snapped shots of hundreds of drivers running red lights at Real Road and Ming Avenue the first two weeks of May.

None of...  
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## Letters to the Editor for Aug. 30

**Date:** August 30, 2004  
**Publication:** Bakersfield Californian, The (CA)  
**Section:** Editorial Page  
**Words:** 1337  
**Page:** B7

Biosolids bad for health

I was appalled to hear the responses provided by Kern County Supervisors Don Maben and Ray Watson regarding the dumping of biosolids on Kern County farmland.

Both men see no reason to stop dumping human waste on land that overlies water banking aquifers. Their reasoning? "These contracts were made years ago by a past board and these companies have invested millions of dollars in equipment." They say they may change their minds if evidence shows such...  
[Click here for complete article](#)

## Tickets causing traffic jam in court

**Author:** AMY HILVERS, Californian staff writere-mail:  
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**Date:** August 24, 2004  
**Publication:** Bakersfield Californian, The (CA)  
**Section:** Local  
**Words:** 703  
**Page:** b1

Too many traffic tickets are clogging Bakersfield's traffic court division, causing violators to wait in long lines and be turned away after showing up for their

day in court.

A massive increase in tickets, coupled with lack of staff, has caused a backlog in getting tickets processed, said Terry McNally, court executive officer.

A ticket that used to take three weeks to process and schedule for court now takes six weeks, he said.

And citizens trying to do the right thing and pay...  
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## Police run red lights

**Author:** JAMES BURGER, Californian staff writere-mail:  
 jburger@bakersfield.com  
**Date:** August 9, 2004  
**Publication:** Bakersfield Californian, The (CA)  
**Section:** Local  
**Words:** 481  
**Page:** b1

Every so often Bakersfield's red light cameras catch a police cruiser or ambulance blowing through a red light.

It happens between three and five times a week, Bakersfield police Capt. Tim Taylor said.

Since January it's happened 65 times.

But no police officer gets a ticket in the mail. No emergency medical technician sees their picture over a \$381 fine for the traffic violation.

In the vast majority of incidents, Taylor said, the emergency vehicle is "running..."  
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## If you see red, stop

**Date:** April 11, 2004  
**Publication:** Bakersfield Californian, The (CA)  
**Section:** Editorial Page  
**Words:** 607  
**Page:** B10

Shoppers in Bakersfield recently had cause for joy -- and it had nothing to do with knockout sales. The reason: A red light camera was being installed at Ming Avenue and Valley Plaza.

Junior Garcia told The Californian that the cameras will reduce accidents at the intersection. Gary Somers said on numerous times he has wished there was a police officer nearby when someone blew through a red light.

Two men who installed the cameras said they spotted numerous motorists whiz through red...  
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## Fourth red light camera coming

**Author:** JAMES BURGER, Californian staff writere-mail:  
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**Date:** March 18, 2004  
**Publication:** Bakersfield Californian, The (CA)  
**Section:** Local  
**Words:** 686  
**Page:** B1

Erik Garza and Chuck Elliott have been hanging out in front of Valley Plaza Mall for a couple of weeks now.

They've watched people blast through red lights at the intersection of Ming Avenue and the onramp to Highway 99 at the western Ming Avenue entrance to the mall.

But when the two men, who work for Loop Electric, finish their work those red light runners will pay for their infractions.

Within a week there should be a working red light camera at the intersection -- snapping...  
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*end*