

NEWS

MCN EXCLUSIVE

Proof cameras ARE highway robbery

**BACK
OFF
BIKING**
MCN
THE MOTOR CYCLE NEWS

EXPERTS RESPOND...

THE science is clear – the effect of the “85th percentile” rule is to have cameras placed where they are likely to catch high numbers of road users, and potentially even increase the chances of accidents occurring.

Whether the inclusion of the rule is a deliberate act to raise more cash, or whether the millions in fines that have rolled in are simply a side-effect of incompetent thinking is harder to say. We showed our findings to key transport authorities for their opinion on our findings:

‘NO TARGET TO REDUCE CRASHES’



KEVIN DELANEY is a member of the RAC Foundation and was a senior police officer 10 years ago when the first speed cameras were put up. Today he wishes he'd never been involved.

He said: “When we installed the first cameras we set a high operating threshold as we wanted to catch the most dangerous road users – those exceeding the speed limit at the highest speeds.

“We never received revenue from cameras so were only under pressure to catch dangerous motorists rather than increase money raised. But this exposes the government policy as being naive and simplistic and not based on preventing crashes, but on having slower crashes. There are no targets to reduce crashes, only to reduce those killed or seriously injured. The idea if we all slow down then there will be fewer accidents does not stand. Cutting crashes requires a fundamental shake-up of road safety education. But that takes time and governments don't think 20 years ahead. They need something quick and catchy while they're in power.”

‘I CAN'T SEE THE PROBLEM...’

SCOT Marchbank from the Department for Transport said: “I have looked at your evidence and I can't see what the problem is. As long as there is a justifiable safety benefit for placing a camera then we will place one there.”

‘A FULL REVIEW IS LONG OVERDUE’

REBECCA Bell from the RAC said: “This evidence seems compelling. What it suggests is that a full review of the way in which speed cameras are used is long overdue.”

Rules require Gatsos to be placed where chances of catching speeders are high, NOT danger areas

AN astonishing flaw in the rules governing where speed cameras can be placed has been uncovered – and revealed exclusively to MCN.

The discovery not only confirms fears that cameras are acting as revenue generating devices, but more shockingly suggests they may be doing the exact opposite of their claimed purpose of reducing accidents.

The rules appear to encourage cameras to be

placed in low risk areas and areas where people are more likely to speed in safety, while many accident blackspots could simply never qualify for a camera.

As part of our Back off Biking campaign, MCN is calling for investment in targeted, proven road safety measures instead of more speed cameras, whose effects in cutting accidents remain dubious at best. This latest discovery provides clear evidence that so-called “safety” cameras may in fact be nothing of the sort.

Anti-camera campaigner

Paul Smith, who uncovered the fatal flaw, said: “This is a significant discovery in the fight for a sensible road safety policy and more honest operating procedures.

“In light of this new evidence, it actually means ALL cameras are placed wrongly!”

Below we explain his discovery in detail:

NEXT WEEK
**YOUR
RESPONSE**

WHEN SLOWER IS NOT SAFER...

IT might seem hard to believe that lower speeds don't necessarily mean fewer accidents. Yet plenty of clear evidence supporting this principle exists.

For example, in 1995 Suffolk County Council imposed a sweeping range of new lowered speed limits. A total of 450 new 30mph zones were introduced, many in areas where there had previously been 60mph limits.

Prior to 1995, accident rates had been falling by about six per year. Yet during the scheme's first year, total fatalities jumped from 35 to 59 – an increase of 69% – and have remained at that level ever since.

An explanation comes from Suffolk coroner Bill Walrond, who blamed at least one death on the new speed limits. He said: “Unnecessary speed limits are detrimental to safety for various reasons. They reduce the opportunity to overtake, thereby making drivers try harder at other times, they cause traffic to bunch, they cause frayed tempers, they cause delay which makes drivers try harder to make up time that they have lost.”

EXPOSED: THE FATAL FLAW IN CAMERA RULES

THE key principle that is central to understanding the fatal flaw in the rule for speed camera placement is a concept known to traffic experts as the “85th percentile speed”.

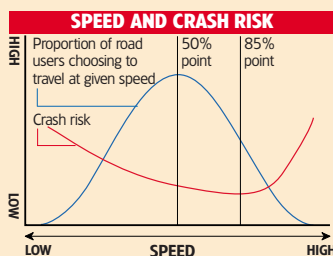
To understand what that means, look at the graph right, the result of long-standing research still widely followed today in the UK and abroad by traffic planners (*see footnote).

The graph shows the general relationship between speed and crash risk – and contains a surprise finding.

The blue curve shows how many road users on a typical stretch of road choose to travel at a range of speeds that they consider to be safe.

Most people select a medium speed, shown by the peak in the speed graph at the middle (or 50th percentile point).

The further you go from the central point to the left (or right), so fewer people think it safe to travel



at a lower (or higher) speed.

That is all fairly obvious. However counter to expectations, the red crash-risk curve, far from simply increasing as speed increases, is actually U-shaped. And the speed that coincides with the

point of lowest risk is significantly higher than the average speed chosen by most road users at the 50th percentile point. The safest speed is in practice that chosen by the relatively small number in the 85th percentile.

Crash risk increases both at speeds above this point AND at speeds below it (though to a lesser degree).

The first key point is that this finding – well known to transport experts – exposes the Speed Kills message as naive.

Rather than risk increasing with speed there is an optimum safe speed for any given stretch of road, determined by the behaviour of road users themselves, which is higher than the majority of them would expect.

Now we get to the rules for camera placement. For a new camera to be installed on a given stretch of road, the following requirements have to be

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