

news

City to unveil red light cameras



Construction crews install red light cameras at 159th Street and Cicero Avenue in Oak Forest. MICHAEL DRAKULICH — SOUTHTOWNSTAR

OAK FOREST | Officials look to catch light runners along Cicero at 159th, 167th streets

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Perhaps it's a little later than they had hoped for, but Oak Forest officials are finally getting red-light running cameras at two of the city's busiest intersections.

Installations of the cameras at 159th Street and Cicero Avenue and 167th Street and Cicero Avenue began last week and are expected to be completed this week.

Oak Forest officials hoped to have the cameras up and running

two or three months ago. But a lengthy permit process with the Illinois Department of Transportation was the reason for the delay, officials said.

"The state is relatively new at issuing permits for these cameras," Oak Forest Police Chief Dennis Olszewski said last week.

"The engineering plans they require are very detailed, and they have their own engineers take a look at everything. If something's not right, it has to come back to us, fixed and then goes back to them," he said.

Communities throughout the state have been criticized for using similar cameras as a way to generate additional revenue.

But police say that's not the case here. More people are injured in crashes involving red light running than in any other crash type, they said.

"Our first priority is to deter red light running," Olszewski said. "The fines are secondary. It's the same as speeding or parking illegally. We're not trying to catch people, we're trying to deter them."

The cameras are only activated

when a car passes through an intersection during a red light. The camera then takes a photo of the car's position during the red light and of the license plate.

Police can then issue a citation and fine to the vehicle owner.

Another added benefit is the cameras can be programmed to search for a particular license plate during an Amber Alert.

Signs will be posted near both intersections warning motorists the cameras are operating. The cameras at 159th Street and Cicero Avenue will face east and west.

Cameras at 167th Street and Cicero Avenue will face north and south.

After construction is completed, a 21-day warning period will take effect. During this period, the cameras will operate and violation notices will be sent to owners but no fine will be assessed.

After the warning period expires, fines will be \$100 for each violation.

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