

Speed Enforcement

Speed cameras undeservedly get a rough ride in the press all over the world. GIANNI FORTUNATO discovers that one company is making positive strides to change that all-too-popular misconception with a potentially life-saving new application

Arguably, the greatest anguish of any parent is when their child goes missing. Whether the child had innocently wandered off or had been the victim of an abduction, the challenge to the law enforcement community is to act as swiftly and efficiently as possible with the resources at hand.

Perhaps now however, Gatso USA, a Massachusetts-based company can provide an improvement to those resources with their newly introduced GS11 AMBER Alert technology.

The AMBER Alert Program is a voluntary partnership between law enforcement, broadcasters, and transportation agencies to activate an urgent bulletin in the most serious child-abduction cases.

Gatso provides photo enforcement systems throughout the world, or more usually referred to as speed cameras and red light cameras. After a year of development, testing and customer evaluation, its flagship GS11 red light and speed camera now carries an AMBER Alert feature that can help ensure the safety of abducted children by decreasing law enforcement's response time in locating suspected criminals.

Unusual suspects

The camera's AMBER Alert feature enables police departments to search in real time for wanted or suspect vehicles at intersections or locations within a city's network of compatible red light or speed photo enforcement cameras. When a suspect vehicle passes a camera location, the camera immediately reports the information back to the police department. An Optical Character Recognition (OCR) system within the GS11 cameras now provides a built-in surveillance solution for law enforcement command staff.

The local or state agency with access to the already operational red-light/speed cameras simply input the license plate or partial plate details into their web-enabled portal. Each camera within the agency's network receives those plate details within seconds and now

A gem of an idea



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temporarily switches from the traditional photo-enforcement role to the more important role of rapid vehicle identification.

As each passing motorist is seen by the camera, the OCR system compares the license plate of the passing vehicle to the suspect vehicle plate uploaded to the GS11's by the agency. If the two are a match, the GS11 sends an email to the agency containing details of the vehicle direction and a photograph of the vehicle passing the camera.

"That message takes typically less than 20 seconds" says Gatso USA President, Andrew Noble. At the end of a predetermined time, the GS11 cameras go out of AMBER Alert and back into red light or speed enforcement.

Testament to the technology

In a recent evaluation of Gatso USA's GS11 AMBER Alert capability conducted in a south suburb of Chicago, Deputy Chief David DeMarco of the Oak Forest Police Department, the chief coordinator of the evaluation, stated, "I was amazed. Within 20 seconds of passing a camera location, we were notified in the field with a message and a photo that the car was detected at the camera location when the AMBER Alert feature was activated. It's a priceless tool for law enforcement when looking for a suspect vehicle involved in an abduction or serious crime. We consider the evaluation to be highly successful."

The evaluation was coordinated after the city of Oak Forest installed several of Gatso's GS11 red light photo enforcement solutions for designated intersections within the city. The city of Oak Forest conducted an extensive evaluation of five red light camera photo enforcement solutions and selected Gatso based on the enhanced product performance.

"We are excited about the value that our AMBER Alert capability provides to law enforcement in helping to save children's lives by immediately locating a suspect vehicle involved in child abductions and other serious crimes. Going forward, the integrated AMBER Alert capability will be rolled out to all of our US clients" says Noble. TH

For additional information please visit www.gatso-usa.com or contact Kristin Noble at k.noble@gatso.com



The Gatso GS11 camera with the built-in AMBER Alert OCR system