

# The Pueblo Chieftain

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## Police say cameras not Big Brother tactic

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*THE PUEBLO CHIEFTAIN*

The city of Pueblo is getting closer to installing red light and surveillance cameras throughout town.

Pueblo Police Chief Jim Billings said that City Council will consider a contract Monday to purchase and install the red light cameras and will update the city's ordinances to bring the fines into compliance with state statutes.

Billings said the city will start with cameras at five intersections in the city.

According to the city's proposed ordinance, the cameras would snap a photo of any car that proceeds through an intersection at least a half-second after the light turns red.

Signs will inform drivers that the cameras are in use and fines for violations, according to state law, will be \$75. Billings said the city's traffic division has identified some of the most dangerous intersections for red light runners and the list will be narrowed before the cameras are installed.

The city will spend between \$5,000 and \$5,500 on each of the five intersections.

The city also will soon install four surveillance cameras at undisclosed locations to help fight crimes such as narcotics dealing and graffiti.

The cameras will be paid for by a portion of a \$400,000 grant the department received to fight methamphetamine use and trafficking in the city. Billings said the department can spend up to \$45,000 to purchase and install the cameras.

The cameras will record nonstop, so officers can review tapes of incidents that are not witnessed firsthand.

Billings said he dismisses Orwellian arguments about the cameras invading people's privacy by saying that in both instances, the cameras will be placed in the open.

"The cameras will only be filming in locations that are public, where anybody has a right to see," Billings said. "We're not looking at any locations where people don't have a right to be there."

The city hopes the red light cameras can help train Pueblo drivers to follow one of the most basic traffic laws on the books while the surveillance cameras may help get drug dealers and taggers off Pueblo streets.

"We know the idea of surveillance cameras are catching on in other cities so this is nothing new," Billings said. "It's just new to our city."