

# Yellow Light: Slow Down Or Speed Up?

## **Many Motorists Do Not Heed Caution, Study Says**

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**MADISON, Wis.** -- Two weeks ago, the Safe Community Coalition set up signs around town reminding motorists that "yellow means stop on red."

Members of the coalition then sat at five problematic intersections around town and recorded the amount of people who ran red lights.



Preliminary statistics from the study show that, during peak travel times at intersections like Mineral Point and Gammon roads, between 50 and 100 cars run red lights every hour.

### **What counts as running a red light?**

For the study, the coalition followed current Wisconsin law regarding the criteria for running a red light. In Wisconsin, any car that does not make it at least three-fourths of the way through an intersection before the light turns red can be cited the same as one blatantly running a red light.

The law allows a driver to go through a yellow light, provided he or she cannot safely stop at the intersection. The study found that when cars ran red lights, it was usually not a solo event.

"If one car was running through a red light, then you'd have three or four cars that would follow and this would be going straight as well as making left turns," said Lisa Bullard-Cawthorne of the Madison Health Department.

On Johnson and Broom streets, where traffic is often backed up, there was another unusual phenomenon, the study says.

"Cars will wait on a green so that the intersection is clear and cars can get through," Bullard-Cawthorne said. "And then, for some reason, when the light turns yellow, the cars go through the intersection after waiting on green."

### **SURVEY**

#### **How much of a problem do you think red light running is in Madison?**

- I see it all the time!
- Same as everywhere else.
- I hardly ever see it.
- I've never seen it.
- No comment.

Answer

[Results](#) | [Disclaimer](#)

## Who runs red lights anyway?

Opinions differ on whether to increase or decrease speed when lights turn yellow.



"I was always taught that it was caution -- that you are slowing down and that the red light is coming," said Kam Suiter of Cedar Rapids, Iowa. "I never learned to hurry up and make it before the light turns red."

For others, especially those who have already suffered the consequences of someone else's poor judgment, they realize the danger and approach each intersection cautiously.

"You really have to be careful," said Blanch Jones, who was hit by a car running a red light on Stoughton Road. "You know you don't know who's who. You don't know whether to stop or to go because you know they zooming past the yellow light so fast. So, you know, I'm very cautious now. I don't even take my car past a yellow light."

Bullard-Cawthorne said she believes red-light running could be reduced if people would see how prevalent it is.

"I would recommend to everybody you know to go to an intersection that's in their neighborhood -- a high traffic intersection -- and just stand there for even 10 minutes and just see the kinds of things that we see," she said.

Bullard-Cawthorne said complete results from the study will be available within a few weeks when the Safe Community Coalition makes its recommendation on how to fix the problem.

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