

ROADSIDE FLASHERS

1991. That's when the journey started to change forever for the UK motorist. The first speed camera was launched, not to much fanfare but with a remarkable result. Situated on the M40 in west London, it reportedly captured 400 instances of excess speed within 40 minutes.

New laws allowed the installation of the now classic Gatso on the A316 over Twickenham Bridge in 1992. This single statistic is notable: at this one location 22,939 drivers were found to be exceeding 65mph in just 22 days.

Since then, speed enforcement has certainly become part of the furniture of the roads; an everyday presence on journeys across Britain as well as in the back of many drivers' minds wherever they go. Whilst the financial aspects of safety camera based enforcement can't be ignored – the revenue raised can be very significant – the statistics backing up their necessity speak for themselves: according to the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA), inappropriate speed is contributing to 15% of serious injuries and 24% of deaths on our roads.

Here, we delve into the different types of enforcement camera tech. What they do and how effective they are.

It's time to play *Top Traffic Cameras...*

GATSO



Introduced	1992
Position	Nearside, rear facing
Detection	Speed at fixed point
Recording	Film
Our Rating	8/10

Our thoughts: These safety cameras have spent almost 30 years proving that they're worth their weight in gold (or their original grey) when it comes to detecting excessive speed on the roads. However, they don't always identify the driver and the in-built film can sometimes run out.

VECTOR



Introduced	2014
Position	Nearside or central
Detection	Speed, red lights, others
Recording	Digital
Our Rating	9/10

Our thoughts: These safety cameras might be among the newest but they have already had a huge impact. They work in all weathers and are replacing fixed point speed cameras in many areas.

HADECS 3



Introduced	2014
Position	Nearside or on gantry
Detection	Variable speed at fixed point
Recording	Digital
Our Rating	7/10

Our thoughts: Some say the front of the device looks a bit like a face watching over the motorway. However these cameras enforce regularly-changing speed limits on some of Britain's fastest roads. Confusion about how they work and when they're used means our rating is reduced.

SPECS



Introduced	1999
Position	Nearside or central
Detection	Average speed
Recording	Digital
Our Rating	7/10

Our thoughts: Originally caught up in the controversy of “stealth” speed enforcement, the SPECS camera has been the workhorse of enforcing speed over distance. Its younger and more powerful sibling VECTOR is gaining ground so our rating for SPECS reflects that.

TRUVELO



Introduced	1999
Position	Anywhere, front facing
Detection	Speed at fixed point
Recording	Film
Our Rating	8/10

Our thoughts: These cameras built on the Gatsos by using more advanced detection methods and capturing images from the front. However, we give a slightly lower rating than we usually might because of the newer, fully digital Truvelo D-Cams.

CAMERA VAN



Introduced	1990s
Position	Anywhere
Detection	Speed at fixed point
Recording	Digital
Our Rating	8/10

Our thoughts: Their ‘pop-up’ nature means that camera vans tackle a variety of speed hotspots across a region with relative ease. They enforce phone and seatbelt violations, too. However, there’s a driving/staffing cost as well as the regular bill for vehicle and equipment maintenance.

POLICE OFFICER



Introduced	from 1980s
Position	Anywhere
Detection	Speed
Recording	Brain, notebook, digital
Our Rating	9/10

Our thoughts: True old school enforcement. Is it the best use of an officer’s time, especially with automated enforcement now the norm? We say if it’s done well and backed up with roadside education, it can be a powerful way of changing road users’ behaviour.