

West Valley Police Now Monitoring Public With Surveillance Cameras

The LAPD's West Valley and Topanga stations' have put the cameras up at undisclosed locations in the Valley which they say are high crime areas. The cameras have been running for several weeks.



The Los Angeles Police Department and Councilman Dennis Zine have a message for criminals: They're watching them.

The police department and council man unveiled the new wireless, mobile [surveillance video](#) cameras at a press conference Thursday.

LAPD's Topanga and West Valley stations each have a new [surveillance system](#), complete with eight wireless cameras per station. [Beginning in November](#), the cameras were installed in undisclosed locations to help the police keep an eye in high-crime areas.

"We're not giving the locations because if we give locations, someone's going to say, 'Well, this particular area is under surveillance, so let me go commit a crime over here,'" Zine explained.

Those monitoring the cameras can rotate and change the camera angle via remote control. The cameras, as a whole, are easily moved to new locations as well, should the stations pinpoint new crime centers to observe.

In addition to the cameras, Topanga and West Valley each have monitoring stations. The stations won't be monitored 24 hours a day, but will record continuously. Monitors will mostly consist of civilian volunteers and reserve officers.

The systems have been up and running for a couple of weeks, now, Zine said at Thursday's meeting. Soon, owners of businesses that have their own surveillance cameras will be able to join into the stations' systems if they want to.

The cameras, which use 3G and 4G [cellular wireless](#) technology, feature 35X optical zoom for facial recognition at a distance of up to 600 feet and the system supports storing footage for five years.

The systems come at a total cost of \$697,830.67, which will be paid via Council District Three street furniture revenue funds (which are called such because these are the funds that come from advertising on "street furniture," such as transit shelters, kiosks and other fixtures located on streets, sidewalks and public rights-of-way).

"People say, 'That's a lot of money,'" said Zine, "but then again, crime costs us a lot of money."

On April 5, 2010, the [City Council approved](#) Zine's motion to transfer the funds for the camera systems purchase and installation. The Los Angeles Police Commission board approved the installation of the cameras at a [July 3 meeting](#).

"Public safety has always been my primary concern," said Zine, who was a member of the police force for 33 years and now serves as a reserve officer. "While crime has been reduced continuously in the city of Los Angeles . . . this will help keep those crime patterns down."

The council member also addressed concerns some residents might have of a 'Big Brother' type atmosphere.

"This is not 1984. This is an environment where we have to have increased safety . . . when you're out in the public view, there's no expectation of privacy. When you're out walking the streets, it's nice to know there's a helicopter overhead or a black and white driving down the street or a motorcycle officer or a police officer there to protect your family. That's what it's about," he said.