

Media Release

Cameras combating crime in the Red Zone

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Cameras operating in the Residential Red Zone are proving a success in catching criminals in the act, and in providing added security for residents still living there.

The Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority (CERA) has multiple cameras placed in strategic positions throughout the Red Zone – with 24-hour a day monitoring – as a part of its suite of electronic surveillance tools.

CERA also operates 24-hour security patrols in the Red Zone, in addition to working closely with police and other emergency services, contractors and residents groups, on combating crime and other risks in the area.

In the last 18 months, CERA has referred dozens of instances of suspicious behaviour caught on camera to police to consider further action.

Last month one of the cameras captured three men in a Crown-owned property in Bexley with a large bag of tools.

Police and security patrols responded soon after the entry to the house was noted, and although the suspects had by that time left, with the help of the camera images, police later located three men and arrested them.

The trio are facing burglary charges and the matter is now before the courts.

It is not only the cameras stopping criminals in their tracks. In October two men entered an unoccupied Red Zone property in Dallington and removed a dishwasher using a sack barrow.

Thanks to an eagle-eyed witness, police were able to quickly respond and arrested the two men outside another house they had entered. The pair admitted burglary charges and were sentenced to eight months' imprisonment with six months of special release conditions, and three months' home detention and 100 hours of community work, respectively.

CERA chief executive Roger Sutton says while most property owners and residents have left the Residential Red Zone, CERA is still working hard to provide a sense of safety and security for those that remain.

"Tools like the cameras are helping to ensure a quick response to any suspicious activity in the Red Zone – but it is only one part of what we are doing to give reassurance to people," Mr Sutton says.

"As neighbourhoods become increasingly deserted, ensuring those people still living there feel safe is a very important focus for CERA."

CERA has contractors maintaining dozens of properties every week in the Red Zone, alongside the Working InZone programme - a partnership with Work and Income and City Care to place people in maintenance work.

This announcement was originally published on cera.govt.nz and beehive.govt.nz

Of 7433 properties in the Red Zone that are eligible for a Crown offer, the owners of 7057 have a signed Sale and Purchase Agreement.

So far 1909 Red Zone properties have been cleared, and another 504 are scheduled for clearance.