



GUIDELINES FOR AFFIXING DECORATIVE LIGHTING TO STREET TREES

Last Revised 12/5/17

GENERAL PROVISIONS

Decorative or seasonal lighting in street trees can add interest and vibrancy to the streetscape. Property owners, business owners, corporations, and associations are allowed to install temporary decorative or seasonal lighting on trees in the public right of way.

There may be up to two separate Street Use permits needed for your tree-lighting project:

- 1) A Street Use seasonal-lighting permit; and/or
- 2) a Street Use mobility-impact permit.

Please note:

- A Street Use seasonal-lighting permit *is not* required for temporary tree-lighting installations lasting less than 3 months
- A Street Use mobility-impact permit *is not* required when the installation or removal of the lighting is completed using a ladder less than 14.1 feet tall
- A Street Use seasonal-lighting permit *is required* to affix tree lighting for longer than 3 months (and not to exceed 3 years)

The purpose of this permit is to ensure that the lighting is installed and maintained in a manner that protects public safety and the health of the tree. The City Arborist will inspect permitted installations after both the installation and removal of the lights. If the installation remains on the tree longer than one year, additional annual inspections will be required.

An additional Street Use mobility-impact permit and traffic control plan (see page 3) may be required for both the installation and removal of the lighting, depending on the method of installation or removal that is proposed (such as a scissor lift or truck-mounted aerial lift)

Whether or not a permit is required, the property owner, business owner, corporation, or association shall install and maintain the lighting in accordance with the following standards and conditions:

STANDARDS

- Trees must have a minimum 4-inch trunk diameter in order to properly support the lighting and prevent damage to the tree
- Pruning branches to accommodate the installation and removal of lights shall not be allowed under a seasonal-lighting permit. Tree pruning associated with seasonal lighting requires an additional tree pruning permit.
- If any trees, tree trunks, branches, or limbs on trees within the right of way are cut, pruned, or damaged as the result of the lighting activity, the permittee (or adjacent property owner if a permit was not required) shall be assessed damage fees per Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) 15.43
- Strands of lights shall be installed at a height that does not impair or otherwise impede pedestrian or vehicle traffic. The strands must hang 8 feet or higher above sidewalks, and 14 feet or higher above vehicle-travel or parking lanes.
- All installations must conform to national electrical standards and codes. The applicant is responsible for obtaining any additional necessary permits from Seattle City Light for temporary or long-term installations.
- All installation and removal activities shall adhere to the Traffic Control Manual for In-Street Work at www.seattle.gov/transportation/document-library/manuals
- Lights and related components, such as attachments and electric cords, shall blend in with the color of the tree bark and branches

- If, at any time, the lighting devices or their components become a safety hazard, they shall be removed at the expense of the permittee (or adjacent property owner if a permit was not required)
- All non-functioning light strands, or those no longer in use, shall be removed from the trees by the permittee (or adjacent property owner if a permit was not required) before new light strands are installed
- After a major storm event where tree damage may have occurred, the permittee (or adjacent property owner if a permit was not required) shall inspect the trees for damage and alert the City Arborist of any problems
- SDOT reserves the right to prune or remove trees to lessen potential threats to public safety. In the event of an emergency that requires action on trees that contain permitted seasonal lighting, SDOT will not be held responsible for damages done to the fixtures and associated equipment.

LIGHTING ATTACHMENT

- All work on the lighting (either installation or removal) shall be performed while the trees are dormant. In general, work in trees shall *not be performed* from March 1 through May 30 to prevent bark damage and to avoid injury to the developing buds.
- Installation and removal of lighting shall always be done in a manner that does not harm the trees
- Lights must be strung loosely enough to allow for at least a half-inch expansion of tree-branch diameter. This slack also allows the branch to sway during normal wind conditions. Any lights found by the city not having adequate slack or otherwise causing damage to the tree shall be loosened or removed and replaced by the permittee (or adjacent property owner if a permit was not required).
- Under no circumstances should light fixtures, electrical wires, or other devices be attached to tree trunks, branches, or limbs with wire, duct tape, or masking tape
- Be advised that there is a holiday work moratorium in effect for the downtown retail core and Pioneer Square from Thanksgiving to January 1. No Street Use permits will be issued for installation or removal of lighting during that time period. Refer to Client Assistance Memo (CAM) 2107 (www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/SDOT/CAMs/CAM2114.pdf) for more information.

SEASONAL LIGHTING PERMIT

The Street Use seasonal-lighting permit requires a permit fee and a minimum inspection deposit. This inspection deposit will be used to support an assessment of the condition of the trees after lighting installation, as well as verification of the number of additional inspections necessary based on the number of permitted trees and duration of the permit.

Additional inspections will be assessed annually and fees correlate with the number of trees that have installed lighting. A list of the current Urban Forestry permit fee types and prices can be viewed at www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/SDOT/Services/Permits/SDOT_Street_Use_Permit_Fee_Schedule.pdf

We require a final inspection when the permit expires, after tree lighting is removed (there is a fee associated with the inspection – please see the current Street Use fee schedule at www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/SDOT/Services/Permits/SDOT_Street_Use_Permit_Fee_Schedule.pdf). You must call the City Arborist at (206) 684-TREE (8733) to schedule this inspection on the first business day following the removal of all equipment. If electrical lights, wires, connectors, or other devices are found on street trees after the permit expiration date, or found to be installed without a permit, they may be removed and discarded by the city without notice. You (the property owner or permittee) may be billed for expenses incurred by the city per SMC Chapter 15.43.

INSURANCE REQUIREMENT

You must submit a certificate of insurance with a minimum liability of \$1,000,000 showing the City of Seattle as an additional insured. Refer to CAM 2102 (www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/SDOT/CAMs/cam2102.pdf) for more information regarding insurance documentation.

MOBILITY IMPACT PERMIT

If your light installation or removal requires a scissor lift or truck-mounted aerial lift, an additional Street Use permit will be required. We prefer that all installations and removals be scheduled to occur after 8 PM in order to reduce impacts on mobility. The type of Street Use permit you may need is determined by the scale of the associated mobility impacts.

Use fees are associated with the duration of impacts and the type of street impacted. Please refer to the current fee schedule (www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/SDOT/Services/Permits/SDOT_Street_Use_Permit_Fee_Schedule.pdf) for more information.

TRAFFIC CONTROL PLAN

A traffic control plan (TCP) may be required to coordinate the mobility impacts of your lighting installation or removal with other permitted activities in the public right of way. The TCP must be approved by SDOT's Transportation Operations Division if the work is on an arterial street or within the designated "high-impact area" bounded by Mercer Street, I-5, South Spokane Street, and Elliott Bay. A TCP review fee shall be paid at the time of application for the Street Use mobility-impact permit. Please refer to CAM 2111 (www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/SDOT/CAMs/cam2111.pdf) for more information.

TEMPORARY NO PARKING ZONES

You may need to temporarily restrict the parking adjacent to your lighting installation or removal work area by implementing temporary no-parking zones. Please review the requirements for temporary parking restrictions at www.seattle.gov/transportation/permits-and-services/permits/parking-permits/temporary-no-parking-permits. Additionally, you can refer to CAM 2114 (www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/SDOT/CAMs/CAM2114.pdf) for more information.

INSTALLATION METHODS

There are three methods of installing light strings in trees: tracing, draping, and wrapping. The preferred methods are tracing or draping. These methods are typically less harmful than wrapping.

Figure 1: Tracing Method Light strings are installed along tree branches at least 2 inches in diameter with Velcro, florist tape, or other similar fastener. Intermittent wrapping is also acceptable, but the lights shall not be affixed to any branch at intervals smaller than 18 inches.

Tracing can be used for either short-term or long-term installations.

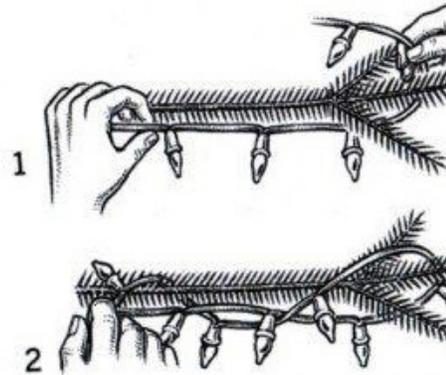
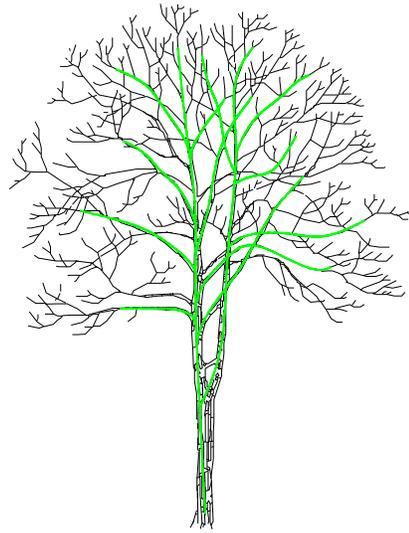


Figure 2: Draping Method Light strings are installed along the outside of the tree canopy and are affixed to tree branches at least 1 inch in diameter with Velcro, florist tape, or other similar fastener. The lights shall not be affixed to the branch at intervals smaller than 18 inches.

Draping can be used for either short-term or long-term installations.

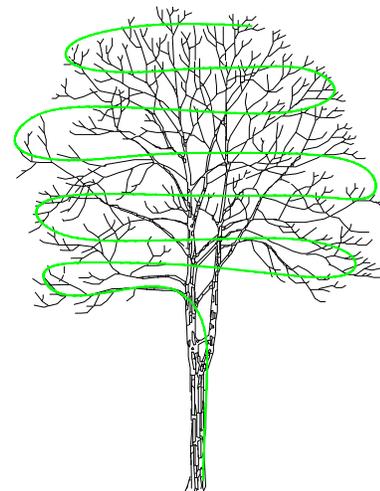
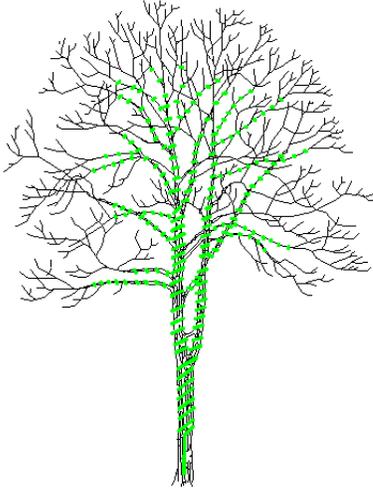


Figure 3: Wrapping Method Light strings are installed by loosely wrapping the string around the trunk or branches at least 2 inches in diameter. The distance between parallel sections of the wrapped string shall not be less than 2 inches. Wrapping tightly is not recommended.

Wrapping can only be used for short-term installations of less than 3 months.



SDOT CONTACTS:

For more information regarding the tree lighting program, contact the City Arborist's office at 684-TREE (8733).

For more information regarding Street Use mobility impact permits, contact Street Use at 684-5253 or seattle.trees@seattle.gov.

Access to Information

Client Assistance Memos are available online at: www.seattle.gov/transportation/document-library/client-assistance-memos. Paper copies of these documents are available at our Permit Services Counter located on the 23rd floor of the Seattle Municipal Tower at 700 5th Avenue in downtown Seattle; phone number (206) 684-5253.

LEGAL DISCLAIMER: This Client Assistance Memo (CAM) should not be used as a substitute for codes and regulations. The applicant is responsible for compliance with all code and rule requirements, whether or not described in this CAM.