



2025 Columbus Festival of Lights Welcome Letter

Stars, Stripes and Holiday Lights

Congratulations on being selected to participate in The Columbus Festival of Lights! We are so excited to have you!

Our top priority is making sure this event is safe for the spectators as well as the entry participants. It is very important that you read the Parade Guidelines. You will find a few details highlighted below. Please do not hesitate to reach out to one of the board members with questions.

Walking Marshals – No matter what kind of entry you are, you must select one walking marshal. They will walk in the upper left-hand corner of your group. They will oversee keeping the pace, carrying your entry sign, and keeping an eye out for any concerns that may arise. We cannot stress how important this position is. If you have a vehicle or float, they will be the eyes and ears for the driver. The Emcees will be looking for the walking marshal's signs to ensure that they are announcing correctly. We also encourage you to help with crowd control. If you notice kids or adults pushing on the gates or encroaching on the parade route, please ask them to step back because Santa is on his way!

Spill Kits and Fire Extinguishers – All units that are motorized or have a generator must have a spill kit. You can purchase or make your own. Kits should include a small shovel, a 5-gallon bucket with a lid, a bag of gray sorbent (like kitty litter), 2 socks filled with sand, and a disposable bag (double layer). A minimum of one 2A10BC-type fire extinguisher must be on each entry or unit. If it is an enclosed entry, there should be one extinguisher inside within reach of the driver and another one on the outside.

Parade Staging – Staging begins at 1 and ends at 4:30. Inspections occur when you arrive. If you arrive late, we cannot guarantee participation. To get into the staging area you **MUST** approach from the north via 11th Street to get to Lindsey Street. Be in the far left/east lane just after the roundabout so you can easily turn left onto 8th Street. You will be processed and directed to your staging location inside the COB parking lot (or on Brown Street). Walking groups must be staged by 5:30.

Santa and Mrs. Claus – There is to be **NO** Santa or Mrs. Claus in any entry.

Lights – Each individual (walking or riding) and their accessories must be illuminated. Glow products may substitute for the lights. There is no minimum number of lights on a float, however, the float and/or tow vehicles must be covered in lights. LEDs, neon, and glow products are also acceptable.

Candy – **Per the City of Columbus and Columbus Police Department, candy or any other objects MAY NOT be thrown from parade entries.** Walkers are encouraged to walk near the curb and hand items directly to spectators. If we receive complaints or reports from law enforcement, volunteers, or spectators about your organization throwing candy or any other object from any vehicle, your organization will not be permitted to participate in future parades. We also encourage you to help with crowd control. If you notice kids or adults pushing on the gates or encroaching on the parade route, please ask them to step back because Santa is on his way!



Driver Meeting - Primary Contact, Walking Marshalls, and all Drivers of entry in the Columbus Festival of Lights Parade are required to attend the entry meeting. Staff will walk attendees through the guidelines and answer any questions groups may have. The meeting is on Thursday November 19th at 5:30 pm. This will be virtual or in person.. The link to attend will be sent the week prior. The meeting place will be announced at a later date.

Keeping the Pace - To keep the Columbus Festival of Lights Parade moving smoothly, entries WILL NOT be permitted to stop for pictures or performances; entries are required to keep pace with the line of march; there are no counter or reverse marches or stunts contrary to forward progress allowed on the Columbus Festival of Lights Parade route. (These activities cause gaps in the Columbus Festival of Lights Parade that result in a bad visual experience for attendees and viewers.)

Inappropriate, unsafe participation, failure to follow instructions or other violations of parade guidelines can result in denied participation for individuals and/or organizations in future parades.

Thank you and welcome to the 2026 Columbus Festival of Lights,

Sarah Forbes and Amy Stoughton Berquist