

# 2026 APS ELECTRIC LIGHT PARADE ENTRY JUDGING & AWARDS



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The following document provides essential details related to the APS Electric Light Parade judging process, entry awards and related operational details.

## **AWARD JUDGING (FRIDAY NIGHT)**

Judging and the public viewing period on Friday evening is an important and fun part of the APS Electric Light Parade experience. The “electric” atmosphere is contagious as entries have the opportunity to display their hard work for the public and other entries to see and gain inspiration from. The public, but especially the children, find the evening magical as they love to see the lights, decorations and special effects up close. It truly symbolizes the spirit of the season and marks the official start of the holiday season in Phoenix.

All entries will be judged based on the entry category used in the registration process and only one award per entry will be allowed except for the Best Use of Lights and Best Presentation of Theme awards which will be awarded to any entry judged Friday night. The awards listed in the following section are judged on Friday night. Below are important details related to judging.

1. Entries that are not staged onsite Friday night will not be judged Saturday.
2. Judges will begin to make their way around the staging area at 5:30 pm to see and talk with entries (judging route will follow the numeric staging plan-lowest to highest number).
3. Entry must have their W9 on file to be judged (required to issue award).
4. An entry may decline being judged (this can be done earlier at check-in or when the judges arrive at the entry).
5. If an entry is not in place or ready (lit) for judging when the judges arrive at their placement point, the entry will not be judged, and the judges will not return later to judge the entry.
6. Floats should remain lit until 8 pm when judging is complete.
7. For Friday night judging, accompanying things like performers that are not riding on the float, are not considered in the judging.
8. Motorized entries that will not remain on property overnight will not be allowed to leave the staging area until the judging / public viewing period is over at 8 pm and event manager determines the staging area lot is safe for motorized operation.
9. Award winners from Friday night will be posted on the Parks and Recreation Department web page shortly after the parade.

10. An entry registered in the wrong category will not be judged.

**A violation of safety, operations or parade guidelines during staging through the end of the parade will result in the forfeiture of any award and prize that may have been determined Friday or Saturday.**

## **AWARDS & JUDGING CRITERIA (FRIDAY NIGHT)**

### **BEST NON-PROFIT ENTRY AWARD**

Judging Criteria:

1. Originality

- a. Entry displays creativity
- b. Entry is unique
- c. Entry displays innovation in its decoration and design concept

2. Theme

- a. Best interpretation and use of theme

3. Presentation

- a. Effective overall presentation
  - i. Use of holiday sound/music (within decibel guideline range) (20%)
  - ii. Eye appeal (effective use of color, materials, effective lighting levels and special effects) (80%)

*1<sup>st</sup> place: This award has a \$750 prize.*

*Runner-up: This award has a \$500 prize.*

### **BEST COMMUNITY ENTRY AWARD**

**(Community A & B are judged together as one category)**

Judging Criteria:

1. Originality

- a. Entry displays creativity
- b. Entry is unique
- c. Entry displays innovation in its decoration and design concept

2. Theme

- a. Best interpretation and use of theme

3. Presentation

- a. Effective overall presentation

- i. Use of holiday sound/music (within decibel guideline range) (20%)
- ii. Eye appeal (effective use of color, materials, effective lighting levels and special effects) (80%)

*1<sup>st</sup> place: This award has a \$750 prize.*

*Runner-up: This award has a \$500 prize.*

## **BEST SMALL COMMERCIAL ENTRY AWARD**

Judging Criteria:

### 1. Originality

- a. Entry displays creativity
- b. Entry is unique
- c. Entry displays innovation in its decoration and design concept

### 2. Theme

- a. Best interpretation and use of theme

### 3. Presentation

- a. Effective overall presentation
  - i. Use of holiday sound/music (within decibel guideline range) (20%)
  - ii. Eye appeal (effective use of color, materials, effective lighting levels and special effects) (80%)

## **BEST LARGE COMMERCIAL ENTRY AWARD**

Judging Criteria:

### 1. Originality

- a. Entry displays creativity
- b. Entry is unique
- c. Entry displays innovation in its decoration and design concept

### 2. Theme

- a. Best interpretation and use of theme

### 3. Presentation

- a. Effective overall presentation
  - i. Use of holiday sound/music (within decibel guideline range) (20%)
  - ii. Eye appeal (effective use of color, materials, effective lighting levels and special effects) (80%)

## **BEST GOVERNMENT ENTRY AWARD**

Judging Criteria:

### 1. Originality

- a. Entry displays creativity
- b. Entry is unique
- c. Entry displays innovation in its decoration and design concept

### 2. Theme

- a. Best interpretation and use of theme

### 3. Presentation

- a. Effective overall presentation
  - i. Use of holiday sound/music (within decibel guideline range) (20%)
  - ii. Eye appeal (effective use of color, materials, effective lighting levels and special effects) (80%)

## **BEST USE OF LIGHTS AWARD**

**(OPEN TO ALL ENTRIES BEING JUDGED FRIDAY NIGHT)**

Judging Criteria:

### 1. Best use of lights

- a. Entry demonstrates the WOW factor as it relates to lights.
  - i. Effective lighting levels; quantity of lights effectively lights up the entry and paints a picture for the viewers
  - ii. Eye appeal / aesthetics; effective use of lights through placement, colors and materials

*1<sup>st</sup> place: This award has a \$500 prize.*

## **BEST PRESENTATION OF THEME AWARD**

**(OPEN TO ALL ENTRIES JUDGED FRIDAY NIGHT)**

Judging Criteria:

### 1. Best presentation of the parade theme

- a. Effective interpretation and use of theme; entry clearly paints a picture of the theme through the design and use of materials, decorations, colors, special effects and holiday music
- b. Entry clearly presents the parades theme

*1<sup>st</sup> place: This award has a \$500 prize.*

## **AWARD JUDGING (SATURDAY NIGHT)**

Saturday night judging takes place during the actual parade because it focuses on the marching band and performance entry categories ONLY. The awards listed in the following section are determined by judging that takes place, during the parade, for entries registered in the performance or marching band categories. Below are important details related to judging.

1. The judges sit at the parade starting point located at Central Avenue and at Montebello so it's important that the groups start performing as they reach the judging area at the start of the parade route.
2. Awards judged Saturday night are: Best Marching Band; Best Performance Group; and Best Use of Lights (marching or performance group only).
3. Winners will be posted on the Parks and Recreation Department web page shortly after the parade.
4. If the entry is not performing as they pass the judges, they will not be judged.
5. An entry that registered in the category but is neither a performance entry nor marching band is disqualified for the awards for that specific entry category.
6. Similarly, for Saturday night, accompanying things, like a float, are not considered in the judging of the performance and marching entries.

## **AWARDS & JUDGING CRITERIA (SATURDAY NIGHT)**

### **BEST PERFORMANCE UNIT AWARD**

Judging Criteria

1. Spirit
  - a. Performers displayed high energy
  - b. Performers engaged the public
2. Execution
  - a. Performance reflects thought in arrangement
  - b. Entry utilizes holiday music
  - c. Entry displays good formation and execution which shows attention to detail, practice and synchronicity
3. Presentation
  - a. Effective overall presentation, appearance/eye appeal (effective use of color, materials and lights on uniforms and instruments) and special

effects. Accompanying things like a float are not considered in the judging.

*1<sup>st</sup> place: This award has a \$500 prize.*

## **BEST MARCHING BAND ENTRY**

Judging Criteria

### 1. Spirit

- a. Entry displayed high energy
- b. Entry engages the public

### 2. Execution

- a. Performance reflects thought in arrangement
- b. Entry utilizes holiday music
- c. Entry displays good formation/execution which shows attention to detail, practice and synchronicity

### 3. Presentation

- a. Effective overall presentation, appearance/eye appeal (effective use of color, materials and lights on uniforms and instruments) and special effects

*\*\*No award- marching bands receive an honorarium- see marching band entry section of this guide.*

## **BEST USE OF LIGHTS**

### **(MARCHING OR PERFORMANCE GROUP)**

Judging Criteria

#### 1. Best use of lights

- a. Entry demonstrates the WOW factor as it relates to lights.
  - i. Effective lighting levels; quantity of lights effectively lights up the individuals (and instruments/props/etc.) and paints a picture for the viewers
  - ii. Eye appeal / aesthetics; effective use of lights through placement, colors and materials

*1<sup>st</sup> place: This award has a \$500 prize.*

## AWARDS- JUDGES SCORING POINT SCALE

Award placement is determined by a panel of judges using the following point scale. Each judging criteria (noted above) will be scored on a 10-point scale (see scale below). Judges scores will be combined to determine the overall score. In the case of a tie, judges will discuss their scores and the entry and will vote to determine the winner.

Point Range	Interpretation
0	None
1 - 3	Limited
4 - 6	Fair
7 - 8	Good
9 - 10	Exceptional

## AWARD WINNERS

\*Award notification changed in 2024 to ensure all guidelines and safety standards were adhered to and that practice will move forward for 2026. Violations of safety rules or guidelines found in the parade participation and Parade Guidelines, Safety & Operations documents will result in a disqualification from the award process.

Results for the award winners from Friday and Saturday will be notified approximately 2 weeks after the parade. At that time, winners will be informed of where and when they can pick up their trophy. All award results will be posted to the event web site as soon as possible following the event. Award winners will be required to submit a W9 prior to receiving their prize.

**A violation of safety, operations, or parade guidelines during staging through the end of the parade will result in the forfeiture of any award and prize that may have been determined Friday or Saturday.**

## **NORTH PHOENIX BAPTIST CHURCH – STAGING SITE HOST**

North Phoenix Baptist Church (NPBC) is our parade staging site host; there are expectations set forth in our staging agreement which all entries are required to abide by.

1. There is a noise ordinance with a 75-decibel limit.
2. All amplified sound must be off by 10 pm.
3. The NPBC campus is smoke free / alcohol free.
4. There is no outside vending on campus.
5. Parking lots are secured following the parade and no vehicles or equipment may be left overnight on Saturday, December 5, 2026.
6. No fundraising, donation collection or sales permitted.

## **DISCLAIMERS**

For Parks and Recreation:

This publication can be provided in an alternate format upon request. Call 602-262-6862 (voice) or 602-262-6713 (TTY). 602-534-3787 (FAX).

E-mail: [receptionist.PKS@phoenix.gov](mailto:receptionist.PKS@phoenix.gov)

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