

LIGHT UP!

The SIDNEY CHRISTMAS SAILPAST lighted boat parade has been great fun for those participating. It is surprisingly easy and affordable to dress up your boat and express your inner creative self with the following tips:

LED is the (only) way to go...

Traditionalists may want to use incandescent bulbs or even candles, but LED lights offer truly amazing advantages:

- 1 LEDs only use **5%** of the power of normal bulbs.
- 2 Their plastic bulb casing resists breakage – important if the wind blows.
- 3 They have incredibly long lives (10 times incandescent).
- 4 They will stay lit if one fails.
- 5 Their luminous characteristics lend themselves to illusion.

They now come in all the traditional colours and compare favourably to incandescent for pricing. Be aware that the white lights are about 40% more expensive than the coloured ones. The energy saving and their longevity enhances their competitiveness over the years – and you can decorate your home after the Sea of Lights is over! Have a look at the BC Hydro website for LED advantages: www.bchydro.com/powersmart/elibrary/elibrary8849.html

What you will need...

First of all – you will need an idea.

Remember that the boats will be circling in a particular direction so that one side of your boat will be on display more than the other. Be mindful of windage for any structure that you fabricate. The LED lights are far more directional in their lighting than incandescent so you can create illusions (e.g. with PVC pipe you can fashion a square rigger or make stars or create a snowman). These creations are far more interesting than a simple up & down on the stays.

Second – Lights

You will need to buy, borrow or scrounge the requisite lights in the colours needed to create your magic light show. Remember that Capital Iron offers a 25% discount on LED lights & ropes for registered participants. You may need to get some flashers or other device to provide the desired effect.

The UL label states that you cannot put more than 3 strings together which is the traditional limit for incandescent lights to avoid fuses being blown. Plan on using exterior-grade extension cords to avoid a shocking display. It is also a good idea to mount or fasten the extension cords so they are not immersed in sea water.

Third – Power Source

An inverter will be needed to supply the AC power for your masterpiece. Do the math: 20 LED bulbs consume 1 Watt of electricity. Divide your total number of bulbs by 20 to determine the estimated consumption. Add 10% for line inefficiency to get your total wattage. For instance – if you are planning on using 1000 bulbs then you will be consuming 55 Watts ($1000/20*1.1$).

You will probably need a 75W inverter. Why? Because if you look at the fine print on the inverter it will say something like: “Rated for 60W continuous and 75 W peak.” This size of inverter will usually fit into a cigarette lighter and any battery will provide ample power for an hour. It is best to use a power bar from the inverter to plug in your extension cords. Inverters are widely available and cost about \$30 for 75W and \$50 for 300W. They are handy to have onboard to power cell phone chargers and to recharge camera batteries. Inverters larger than 100W usually have to be connected directly to the battery with the supplied alligator clips.

On the night of...

Make sure that everyone (including you – the infallible and immortal skipper) wears a lifejacket and carries a flashlight. Not only does the flashlight make it easier to find the MOB, but it helps that same MOB from being run over by the boats behind you.

Make sure that you have good instrument night navigation mode lighting as the ambient lighting will be distracting.

If you have an experienced crew member then having a bow watch (secured by a safety line) for crab pots and debris is a good idea. Have a member of crew familiarize themselves with the maze of wires so that they can take the appropriate steps to extinguish the lights for any reason.

Save the alcohol consumption until after the parade. It's dangerous, especially at night, & against the law.

Its one thing to follow the coast guard boat or the boat in front of you during the parade however returning to port afterwards is straight night navigation. Plot & know your course & markers along the way before the parade. The green day beacon on Graham Rock is key. Hopefully it will be changed to a lighted mark in time for the parade.

Check your tide tables carefully for Nov 24/07 as there is a minus tide later in the evening.

And remember to have FUN! Just do it safely!

