

Minnesota Astronomical Society Star Party Guidelines

If this is your first star party, or it has been a while since you've been to one, please take a few moments to review these guidelines.

- 1. PARK FEES AND HOURS OF OPERATION:** Visitors are encouraged either pay the daily use fee as posted at the entrance to the park or purchase an annual park permit. There are no fees charged to visit the observatory for MAS members. During MAS public events, the park's closing hours are extended until the last MAS member leaves the park.
- 2. RESTROOMS:** There are no restroom in the observatory building. Indoor restrooms are available in the large barn at the park entrance (entry is on the building's north side). There are also outhouses northwest of the observatory, beyond the baseball diamond. During summer months, restrooms are available in the building by the lake.
- 3. Please AVOID USING WHITE LIGHT.** Do not use a white flashlight. The human eye requires 30 minutes to fully adapt to darkness. If exposed to white light, even for a second, this "dark adaptation" is lost and the thirty minute process starts all over again. Using a dim red light (a flashlight with a red filter for example) is appreciated at star parties. Red "glow sticks" may also be available at the observatory for a small donation -- check with an volunteer for more information.
- 4. Similarly, please AVOID USING YOUR VEHICLE'S HEADLIGHTS** unless you are well away from the observing area. Star party participants appreciate your use of your vehicle's parking lights for illumination while driving near the observing area. If possible, turn off internal and accessory lighting (trunks, interior lights, etc.) as well. Use common sense regarding use of headlights when arriving or departing a star party. Balance your need for driving safety with star party participants' desire to that you limit their use. (Note: Temporarily dimming the interior dashboard lights will make it easier to see the road when using your vehicle's parking lights).
- 5. PLAN YOUR DEPARTURE** by backing into your parking space in order to avoid flooding the observing area with the light from your back-up lights when you leave. Park away from the main observing area when possible.
- 6. CHILDREN ARE WELCOME WHEN ACCOMPANIED BY AN ADULT.** Consider carefully the child's age and attention span before bringing them along. Star gazing can quickly become boring for younger children. If you do bring children, please supervise them at all times for their safety and the safety of the astronomical equipment in use at the star party. No running or playing in the observatory or around any telescopes.
- 7. DRESS APPROPRIATELY.** It can become quite chilly during spring, fall and winter nights, particularly at star party sites away from the city. Bring a coat, gloves, hat and extra clothing with you just in case it becomes cooler than you anticipate.
- 8. BUGS,** particularly mosquitoes, are a nuisance in the summer. If you need to use an insect repellent, please use a lotion. If you have a spray repellent, only apply it downwind and well away from any telescopes.
- 9. NO LITTERING.** If you brought it, take it with you when you leave. Please, try not to leave anything on the walls of the observatory and search the area before leaving to check for items you may have dropped.
- 10. Please BE CONSIDERATE OF OTHERS.** Avoid loud radios or music. Always ask permission before touching or using someone else's equipment.
- 11. SMOKING** is not allowed within the observatory. If you must smoke, please do so only away from the observatory, the observing area and any equipment.
- 12. NO FOOD OR DRINK NEAR THE TELESCOPES.** Avoid having food and especially drinks near the telescopes. Also, **NO ALCHOLIC BEVERAGES** at the observatory during our public star parties. Some telescopes have an open design and can be damaged easily by someone accidentally dropping something onto a telescopes optics.
- 13. RESPECT OTHERS.** The Minnesota Astronomical Society is open to all, regardless of age, gender, ethnic background, religion, etc. Inappropriate comments or actions will not be tolerated, and after a suitable warning, offending parties will be asked to leave.
- 14. Please CONSIDER LEAVING YOUR PETS AT HOME.** Not everyone is comfortable around animals and their presence introduces the possibility of personal injury or damage to expensive astronomical equipment.
- 15. DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK QUESTIONS!** -- MAS members enjoy talking about their hobby and are often willing to share their love of the universe with you. But also consider that some members may be involved in specific observing activities or projects that might limit their ability to answer your questions in detail.
- 16. HAVE FUN!** Star parties are meant to be enjoyed by all. That's why they're called parties!