

Overnight Flashlight Use Policies

One of the Houston Zoo's Strategic Priorities is to ensure that every animal in our collection receives high-quality animal welfare. As key players promoting our institutional mission and goals through Educational programs, we strive to uphold these standards and ensure animal welfare is a top priority for us and by extension, our guests. Below are the policies approved by Animal Operations for Overnight Staff flashlight use during evening tours on Zoo grounds.

1. **All flashlights used for Zoo overnights will be red-light or green-light flashlights.** No white-light producing flashlights should be used, including cell phone lights, camera flashes, or any other white-light producing item. Additionally, only education staff will be using a flashlight to illuminate any animals or exhibits. Only Green-light flashlights are to be used in the Aquarium or Herpetology building.
2. Flashlights are a tool used by overnight staff to assist guests in viewing an animal on exhibit; however, **continuous illumination for more than 30 seconds in duration is not permitted.** Guides should encourage participants to let their eyes adjust and engage their other senses to help locate an animal on exhibit before resorting to turning on a flashlight. This method of presenting an animal sets a good example with our guests on how to interact with wildlife in evening/nighttime hours and establishes mindful practices they can take away at the end of our programs.
3. When presenting an animal on exhibit using a flashlight, complete focus should be on the animal's reactions as well as how the surrounding space is being illuminated. The flashlight should be slowly directed at a spot near the animal, such as a rock, a tree, the ground or other solid surface. The flashlight position should be changed while looking at any animals or exhibits using a slow and steady motion. Never shine the light directly on the animal or in its eyes; the ambient light will illuminate the animal, causing minimal disturbance while still allowing the guests to see.
4. If there are two guides present, one should talk and the other should use the flashlight. If presenting alone, illuminate the exhibit for the group to see without talking. Either turn off the light or turn it towards the ground at your feet before beginning to speak to the group.
5. Be aware of signs of stress. **If there are any sudden changes in behavior of the animal, stop illuminating immediately,** turn off all flashlights, and report the incident to the Sr. Overnight Coordinator. For example, this may include but not limited to the following signs:
 - "Freezing" in position and/or staring in one direction for extended period of time.
 - Moving away from light, shrinking back from light
 - Changing location on exhibit
 - Pacing
 - Sudden quick movements (i.e. running)
6. Illuminating exhibits is only allowed from public viewing areas. Do not shine lights into any "behind-the-scenes" or off-exhibit holding.

7. Animal Department Managers will communicate with the Sr. Overnight Coordinator regarding any animal enclosures that should not be illuminated based on current medical, behavioral, or other restrictions/concerns. These animals will be placed on a Do Not Illuminate list until otherwise instructed.

Animals permanently placed on the Do Not Illuminate list are:

- All Birds- including mammal exhibits that also house birds overnight
- Elephant barn windows
- Giraffe windows
- Clouded Leopard

In addition to abiding by the flashlight use policies, overnight staff should ensure that animals are minimally disturbed. All talking or discussion must be kept at low levels (inside voice) in order to minimize noise disturbance of the animals. **Example:** Animals should never be intentionally roused.

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of the Overnight Flashlight Use Policies. I agree to read the policies thoroughly and abide by the provisions within. I agree that if there is any provision in this policy that I do not understand, it is my responsibility to seek clarification from my immediate supervisor.

I also understand that these policies are continually evaluated and may be amended, modified, or terminated at any time. I further understand that as these modifications occur, I will receive amendments.

All Overnight Staff Policies are in addition to and not exclusive of Houston Zoo and Conservation Education Department policies. Overnight staff are expected to know and abide by zoo-wide policies in accordance with the employee handbook that they have all received. Deviation from Zoo and Overnight policies/procedures may result in disciplinary action.

Employee (Print Name)

Employee Signature

Date