

★ Protecting Our Dark Skies ★ Preserving Palomar Observatory ★ Serving Our Community ★

WHAT IS ORDINANCE 655?

Riverside County Ordinance 655, the **Mount Palomar Light Pollution Ordinance**, was adopted to protect Palomar Observatory — one of the world's premier astronomical research facilities — from the damaging effects of light pollution. It regulates how outdoor artificial lighting must be installed and used throughout unincorporated Riverside County and within approximately 45 miles of Palomar Observatory.

 **This ordinance does NOT require you to replace existing light fixtures — it applies to new installations and permitted remodels.**

WHERE DOES IT APPLY?

ZONE A - Within 15 miles of Palomar Observatory

- Strictest lighting controls
- Lowest allowable color temperatures
- Includes portions of western Riverside County

ZONE B - 15 to 45 miles from Palomar Observatory (as the crow flies...the Santa Rosa Plateau is included!!)

- Includes: Murrieta, Temecula, Wildomar, Lake Elsinore, Hemet, Perris, Moreno Valley, Menifee & Anza
- All new outdoor fixtures must be **fully shielded**
- LEDs must be **3,000K color temperature or lower**

THE THREE LIGHTING CLASSES

CLASS I - Color-Critical Uses

- **Used for:** Outdoor sales/dining areas, assembly or repair areas, outdoor advertising signs, recreational facilities
- **Requirement:** Full shielding; approved lamp types required

CLASS II - Functional / Security Uses

- **Used for:** Walkways, private roads & streets, parking lots, equipment yards, outdoor security lighting
- **Requirement:** Must be **fully shielded; directed downward only**

CLASS III - Decorative Uses

- **Used for:** Flagpoles, trees, fountains, statues, building walls
- **Requirement:** **Must be shielded; OFF between 11 PM & sunrise**

KEY RULES FOR HOMEOWNERS

- ✓ All **NEW** outdoor light fixtures must be **fully shielded — light directed downward only, not into the sky**
- ✓ LED lights must have a color temperature of **3,000K or lower** (warm white / amber tones)
- ✓ Low-pressure sodium lamps remain an approved option for security lighting
- ✓ **Decorative lighting (Class III) must be shut off between 11:00 PM and sunrise**
- ✓ Building permits for new lighting require a photometric plan showing compliance
- ✓ Major remodels (over 50% of improvement value) may trigger retrofit requirements

✓ EXEMPTIONS

- Low-pressure sodium security lighting on single-family homes is exempt from some restrictions
- Existing legally installed fixtures are **NOT** required to be replaced
- The Planning Director may approve equivalent alternate designs on a case-by-case basis
- Emergency lighting is not subject to curfew requirements

☀️ WHY IT MATTERS FOR OUR COMMUNITY

💡 **Light pollution** affects scientific research, wildlife habitats, energy consumption, and quality of life. This ordinance ensures Riverside County remains a responsible steward of our shared night sky.

📡 **Palomar Observatory** - Home to cutting-edge research; light pollution directly impacts scientific discovery

🌙 **Dark Skies for All** - Reduced glare, better sleep, and beautiful starry nights for residents

⚡ **Energy Savings**

To report a neighbor's violation:

Contact the Riverside County Code Enforcement; submit a form and follow up w/ a phone call (or several) Phone: [\(951\) 955-2004](tel:9519552004) Text: [\(760\) 393-3344](tel:7603933344)