

Electrical Signs

Getting the Right Equipment: If your sign will be connected to electricity, your design must comply with the [Seattle Electrical Code](#) for wiring methods and all equipment must be tested and listed for the intended use. For example, if you plan to install an electric sign outside, it must carry a “wet location” listing from an approved testing lab such as Underwriter’s Laboratory (UL), or the installation must be field evaluated by an approved testing agency before a final inspection can be passed.

When installing a lighted sign, the equipment used must also comply with the [Seattle Energy Code – Commercial](#) for lighting controls and lighting limits. The energy code requires one of the following lighting control methods to be installed with electrically powered signs:

- When the sign lighting will stay on from dusk to dawn – a photosensor or astronomical time switch control is required.
- When not dusk to dawn lighting – both a photosensor and a time switch is required, or you may use an astronomical time switch.

Reduced Lighting Levels: the Energy Code requires that sign lighting must be reduced by 30%:

- Between midnight or business closing time, whichever is later, and 6 a.m. or business opening time, whichever is earlier; or
- During any period when activity is not detected on site for any 15 minute time period.

Controllers: All time switch and control devices must be capable of retaining the programming and time settings for 10 hours if power is lost. Automatic time switches are not the same as astronomical time switches which have added features that include automatically adjusting to the changes in lighting at different times of the year and adjusting for daylight savings time. Be sure to order the right kind of time switch for your sign, depending on the company’s hours of operation. See Seattle Energy Code section C405.2 for exterior lighting controls.

Nuisance lighting: Light and glare from signs is regulated by the [Seattle Land Use Code](#) section 23.55.016 which requires that:

- The source of light for externally illuminated signs shall be shielded so that direct rays from the light are visible only on the lot where the sign is located.
- The light source for externally illuminated signs, except advertising signs, shall be no farther away from the sign than the height of the sign.

Questions? You followed the instructions above and still have questions. What now? Email your questions to the sign plan: steve.sampson@seattle.gov or you may call 206-684-8419.