

SHOOTING CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

A Helpful Handout Created by the Staff of Wolfe's Camera

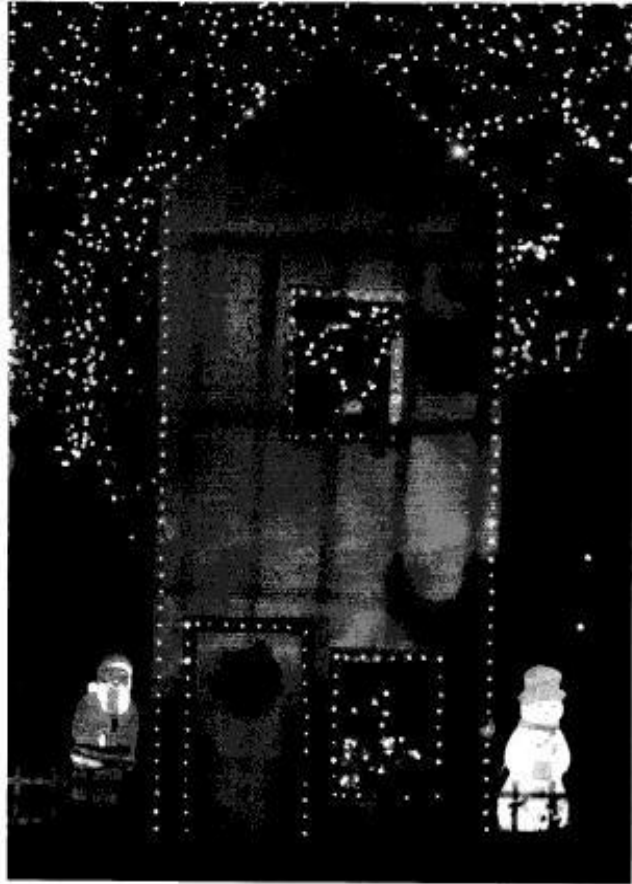
Every year some of us like to brave the cold, or carry a camera when we go out for a drive, and take pictures of some of the many beautiful Christmas decorations that have been put out. This can be a very rewarding experience that produces some beautiful pictures if you have some guidelines to help you when you start out.

Exposure of Christmas lights is going to vary somewhat by the choice and amount of lights used in the decorations. The photo at the right was the best exposure of a bracketed series and was shot at 1/2 second at $f5.6$ with ISO 200 film. Kodak Photoguide recommends 1 full second at $f5.6$ with the same film, however this display was quite well illuminated. Actually, the best suggestion if possible is to bracket your exposure to either side of the recommended exposure as I did with this and select the best negative to print.

You will obviously need a tripod or some other support and a cable release. In the absence of a cable release you could use your self timer, as the display usually won't be going anywhere

Higher speed films could provide limited hand holding ability. If you have a fast normal lens and an ISO 400 film, you could expose 1/15 at 2.8 or even 1/30 at $f2$. Slow telephoto zoom lenses would be nearly impossible to hand hold even using super speed color film, plus the grain becomes very noticeable in solid areas, such as the large expanses of black that appear in most Christmas decoration scenes when using these films.

Cameras with only automatic exposure are difficult if not impossible to use for shooting Christmas decorations. Because of the large amount of black and relatively small amounts of lights, the pictures are usually very overexposed, even on cameras with sophisticated exposure systems. To the other extreme, on simple point & shoot cameras, their maximum exposure is usually not sufficient and results in drastic under exposed.



SUGGESTED EXPOSURES CHART

Film Speed	Exposure	Bracket Range
ISO 100	1 Sec	f4-5.6-8
ISO 200	1/2 Sec	f4-5.6-8
ISO 400	1/2 Sec	f5.6-8-11
ISO 800-1000	1/4 Sec	f5.6-8-11

Wolfe's

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Weekdays: 8:00-5:30pm
Thursday: 8:00-8:00pm
Saturday: 8:00-5:30pm