

An East Texas Christmas Tradition

It's a Christmas tradition for many to hop in the car and go out as a family and enjoy the many Christmas lighting displays across Houston and surrounding counties... We are reigniting an old tradition of having a Home Lighting and Decorating Contest, creating a list of lighting displays AND having some good old-fashioned fun, EastTexasChristmas.Com and KIVY Radio are bringing back the fun of a Christmas Lighting and Home Decorating Contest to Houston County. We hope to provide everyone involved with a chance to have fun as a community while being a part of a great event. Maybe your efforts will help your city outshine the other cities in Houston County, and we will be letting everyone know that Houston County outshines the rest of East Texas. Judging will be in all five cities in Houston County and their surrounding area allowing lots of homes to be entered. The only requirement to enter the contest is that your entry must be a residential property, and it must be located within the requirements of rule number 7.

The contest is for all five incorporated cities in Houston County (Crockett, Grapeland, Kennard, Latexo and Lovelady) and displays up to 1 nautical mile from their city limits. All entrants will be listed on an easy-to-read Google map so that everyone can go and enjoy the handy work. Houses submitted that are beyond the one-mile limit may be listed on the map but not judged.

Staff will judge homes in **your choice** of one of five categories, AND you **must** pick the **one category** you want to be judged in. Be careful though, If you don't pick a category, you are defaulted into the Clark Griswold category. There will be only one winner in each category countywide and two Special Awards countywide. There will be a maximum of 24 judges, 16 adults and 8 youth.

Want to get in on the fun and show your creative talent?

Click here to complete the web-based entry form to be listed on the map and have a chance to win and be recognized with one of the five awards. (your name and email will NOT be listed on our map - only your street address)

More of the passive Christmas light enthusiast and revel in others efforts?

So, you aren't into hanging by your toenails to put up a bunch of lights just to have to take them down in a month. Just load your family in the Family Truckster and follow this link to the map and ride, relax and enjoy some quality family time looking at the Christmas lights.

East Texas Christmas Tradition 2026 Official Contest Rules

1. Entry is free! No cost or fees will apply.
2. To enter the contest, you must go to KIVY's website www.kivy.com or www.easttexaschristmas.com and follow the link to the registration page and complete the simple form.
3. Entrants must be registered by 5 p.m. Monday December 7, 2026. Once registration closes, no further entries will be allowed. Participants should ensure that all lights, animations and decorations are in place and activated for the judging period beginning Wednesday, December 9, 2026, through Sunday night December 13, 2026. Lighting must be operational from 6 PM until 10 PM each night of judging. Winners will be announced Tuesday December 15, 2026, on KIVY and on EastTexasChristmas.Com.
4. Light displays must be visible from the public road or street. Judging will be based on "curb appeal" as viewed from the public street only. Therefore, only those decorations located on the street side of the property will be judged (corner lots will be judged from both streets if applicable). Judges are not allowed to travel down a private road or extended driveway.
5. Displays may consist of any Christmas holiday, religious, or winter theme as long as they fit your selected category. The contest is for exterior decorations only, including up close decorations in windows that are visible from the public roadway. All entries are judged on originality, creativity with lights, and use of the "Christmas Holiday" theme designated in their entry choice. Special lighting, musical effects and live actors are encouraged. Decorations will be judged on their matching the category chosen and originality, not necessarily on the cost invested or on the amount of decorations used.
6. For contestants entering the Animated (synchronized) Lighting category, you are urged to limit your show to a maximum of 3 songs with a time limit not to exceed 15 minutes during the judging nights. This will allow the judges to see your 'Mini' show and not delay them going and judging other contestants. Put what you consider your better sequences out for those nights

7. The Christmas Lighting Challenge will be in the five incorporated cities of Houston County: Crockett, Grapeland, Kennard, Latexo and Lovelady and a distance of up to 1 nautical mile (as the crow flies) outside of the five incorporated cities. Distance measurements will be determined by Google Maps. There will be only one winner per category, county wide.

8. When registering online, you must determine which one of the five categories you want to be judged in. Your selection is final, however, If you fail select a category, you are defaulted into the Clark Griswold category. There will be only one winner in each category countywide and two Special Awards countywide.

9. By entering this contest, you agree to have your address listed publicly on the map and on the list of addresses for advertising purposes of this contest online at EastTexasChristmas.Com, KIVY, and KIVY TV. If you win, or receive an honorable mention, your name and address will be announced as a category winner of this contest online at EastTexasChristmas.Com and KIVY Radio along with KIVY-TV 16.

10. By entering this contest, you agree and acknowledge to hold EastTexasChristmas.Com and KIVY, its judges, agents and volunteers fully harmless for any and all losses you may incur as a result of participating in this contest.

11. Winners will receive bragging rights and a keepsake trophy. Winners will also be featured on EastTexasChristmas.Com website and KIVY's TV-16! This event is all about community spirit and Christmas fun.

12. EastTexasChristmas.Com staff and volunteers will judge all entries. One winner will be awarded for each category countywide. Judges and other administrative personnel are allowed to enter this contest however judges that have entered this contest may not judge any houses in the category they have entered. Also, they may not ride share during judging with other judges to prevent improper influencing. All judges' decisions are final.

Judging Categories

Conventional Lighting

CLARK GRISWOLD AWARD: Because you can never have too many lights! Think Chevy Chase in “Christmas Vacation”!

Create an over-the-Top Christmas – Do a drum roll and say bam!

See if you can create the brightest display that truly lights up the night. While you’re at it, go ahead and [throw in the kitchen sink](#).

COUSIN EDDIE AWARD: The tackiest display you’ve ever seen, ‘nuff said.

THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS AWARD: A display that has an organized appearance or theme that captures a *Classic* or *Traditional Christmas*. Think of “Hallmark” or “It’s a Wonderful Life” (it depends on your generation). Nothing too over the top, a few lights, maybe some hot chocolate, finish off with a sprinkle of elegance and call’er done.

BEST CHARACTER USE AWARD: Best use of holiday characters (Frosty, Santa, Mrs. Claus, Rudolph, Buddy the Elf, etc.). Both blow up and blow mold.

Animated (synchronized) Lighting

BEST USE OF ANIMATION AWARD: Show your wizardry of synchronizing your lights and music by bringing them together to create your Winter Wonderland.

Special Awards

JUDGE’S FAVORITE: The display that the judges enjoyed the most.

KIDS CHOICE: This year there will be some 7, 8, 9 and 10 year old judges and this is how they see Christmas lighting.

How It Works

Those who want to light up their home exterior and be entered in the annual contest have until Dec. 8th to sign up. Homes must reside within one of the 5 cities or within 1 nautical mile of the city limits to qualify for being judged. Once the address is verified using Google Maps, entrees will be added to a map that will be added to this page.

The category winners will be announced on December 15, 2026. Awards with family photo will be December 15, 2026.

The Fine print: By submitting your entry you agree to allow EastTexasChristmas.Com and KIVY Radio to photograph and publicize your address in promotional media and winner's names in perpetuity. No email addresses or phone numbers will be published or disseminated. You agree to assume full liability for any injury or loss to yourself or your property and for any cause whatsoever resulting from or caused by your entry into and promotional media associated with this contest. You expressly release EastTexasChristmas.Com and KIVY Radio and any of their representatives from any and all liability claims whatsoever of any loss or injury in perpetuity. The organizers and sponsors accept no responsibility for damage, injury, or theft which may occur as a result of your entry. The Holiday Lights Decorating Contest is designed to encourage community spirit. All decisions are final.