

MOUNT KOBAN ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

LASER POINTER USE POLICY

Updated July 7, 2010

RATIONALE AND INTENT

The organizers of Mt. Kobau Star Party recognize that while astronomical laser pointers are a useful convenience for pointing out celestial targets, their use at MKSP presents several hazards. The concentrated light from laser pointers can impair or damage the vision of people and animals; it may also startle or confuse them. Further, it can interfere with and/or damage the observing or imaging pursuits of other star party attendees.

For these reasons, we have considered imposing an outright ban on laser pointer use at MKSP. That proposal was rejected in favour of a restrictive policy, as detailed here. The current policy is intended to establish clear and enforceable rules for limited use of laser pointers. It applies to all attendees, visitors, and organizing personnel at Mt. Kobau Star Party. If the policy proves ineffective in controlling reckless use of laser pointers, a ban will be imposed.

GENERAL RESTRICTIONS

Casual use of laser pointers is not permitted. Use laser pointers only where there is no less intrusive way to specify a spot in the sky.

In all instances, use a short burst from the laser pointer rather than a continuous beam. Approximately two seconds "on" should be sufficient.

No non-astronomical targets! A good rule of thumb is to direct the laser pointer beam no less than 10 degrees above the horizon and similarly away from any aircraft (aircraft recognition is clarified below).

SPECIFIC RESTRICTIONS

UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES direct the beam of a laser pointer in a manner where it could reasonably be expected to shine either directly or by reflection or refraction into the eyes of any person. Do not point the beam at any perceived individual or group of people, any telescope, any MKSP camping or observing area, any tent, any automobile, any RV, or any aircraft. In flight, aircraft are recognizable by a regularly flashing light or lights, and/or by vivid red or green lights, or both red and green lights; there may or may not be audible sound.

UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES direct the beam of a laser pointer (either directly or by reflection/refraction) at a perceived animal or group of animals.

UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES direct the beam of a laser pointer below the horizon where it may reasonably be expected to be seen by people at a presumed "safe" distance.

Laser pointer use is banned in overcast weather.

EMERGENCIES

Laser pointer use as a signal in an emergency may be excused if the restrictions on pointing at people and animals are still observed, and if there is no obvious alternative.

ENFORCEMENT

Infractions will be dealt with via polite but firm warnings from MKSP staff to the identified offender. Where compliance does not follow multiple warnings, the offender may be asked to leave or to surrender their laser pointer until they leave. Such incidents shall be included in the MKAS's annual reporting to the Ministry of Environment. Where MKSP staff are convinced that use of a laser pointer has or could become a law enforcement issue, police may be contacted and asked to attend.