

April 10, 2022

**BY EMAIL**

Celia Meza, General Corporation Counsel  
Chicago, Illinois  
celia.meza@cityofchicago.org

**Re: LED Flashing Lights**

Dear Celia Meza,

We were notified of an incident in Chicago. The reason we are writing to you is related to the city's use of LED flashing lights in its response to the incident. The video of the incident is available here: <https://www.cbsnews.com/chicago/news/river-north-speeding-car-multiple-people-hit>



*Figure 1 - LED Flashing Lights*

LED flashing lights are unregulated; however, that does not mean that LED flashing lights are safe or constitutional. The use of LED flashing lights is a clear violation of basic human rights because

the exceedingly dense light and rapid flashing are purposely designed to inflict mental pain. This constitutes torture.<sup>1</sup>

A February 2022 review study sponsored by the Epilepsy Foundation concluded that any flashing light with a luminance exceeding 20 candela per square meter is likely to cause an epileptic seizure.<sup>2</sup> The LED flashing lights used by Chicago police likely exceed 100,000 candela per square meter. In addition to causing epileptic seizures, LED flashing lights cause migraines, panic attacks, anxiety, fear, PTSD, and other negative neurological responses.

A December 2021 study sponsored by the Emergency Responder Safety Institute showed that LED flashing lights interfere with driver vision and endanger the lives of first responders.<sup>3</sup> Previous studies have shown that flashing lights endanger first responders and the public, while soft, static lights provide the desired warning.<sup>4</sup>

The United Nations has a Universal Declaration of Human Rights.<sup>5</sup> LED flashing lights violate several of these basic human rights.

Article 3: *Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.* – LED flashing lights interfere with basic human functioning of using our eyes, depriving us of our liberty and security, and even our right to life for those who have epilepsy.

Article 5: *No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.* – LED flashing lights are not warning lights; they are designed to assault and punish, dehumanizing people, even if they are simply innocent bystanders.

Article 7: *All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.* – LED flashing lights discriminate by creating a barrier to access. LED flashing lights prevent those who are LED-reactive from navigation without undue fear of harm or injury. LED flashing lights literally prevent people from seeing, thinking, and concentrating.

Article 13: *Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.* – LED flashing lights prevent freedom of movement.

While there are additional articles that may apply as well, it should be clear at this point that nobody has a right to shine LED flashing lights into the eyes of citizens because doing so violates their civil rights.

We request that the city of Chicago take the following actions:

- 1) Prohibit the use of LED flashing lights by first responders, including by the police department, the fire department, and ambulance services.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.justice.gov/file/18791/download>

<sup>2</sup> <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/epi.17175>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.respondersafety.com/Download.aspx?DownloadId=f31a5f73-7b95-44c7-bd25-1e4cdfce5229>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.softlights.org/are-led-flashing-lights-dangerous/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>

- 2) Develop Codes to explicitly protect citizens, especially those with light sensitivity disabilities, from LED flashing lights.

Sincerely,

*Mark Baker*

Mark Baker  
President

Soft Lights Foundation  
[mbaker@softlights.org](mailto:mbaker@softlights.org)

**YOU DON'T HAVE THE RIGHT  
TO SHINE YOUR  LIGHT  
IN MY **