

First-Time User Support at LDT

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Support for first-time LDT observers offered by Lowell Observatory

Lowell Observatory assists first-time LDT observers (or first-time users of a particular instrument on the LDT) as follows.

A Lowell Observatory staff member will be available to accompany an observer on his/her first night (either physically or remotely) for at least part of the evening to answer questions, discuss how things work etc. New observers should contact the TOs scheduled for their night ([ldtoperator at lowell dot edu](#)) and copy ([tac at lowell dot edu](#)) as long in advance as possible to let us know about your first night needs. If you do not hear back in a timely fashion, email Stephen Levine ([sel at lowell dot edu](#)) or Timothy Ellsworth-Bowers ([tbowers at lowell dot edu](#)) to inquire.

The Lowell staff member who will assist you can take questions before you come out, and will normally plan to meet you out at the LDT (or virtually, depending on the situation) about an hour before sunset to leave time to go over procedures before the crunch for twilight calibrations. The Lowell staffer will usually stay until observing has reached a routine level.

First-time users should carefully read the instrument user manual for the instrument(s) they plan to use. Manuals are available from the drop-down menu at the top of this page. All facility instruments (LMI, DeVeny, and NIHTS) are controlled through a LOUI (Lowell Observatory Observer Interface), and a detailed description of LOUI operation is provided in the [LMI User Manual](#), although instrument-specific differences from LMI are discussed in the relevant manuals.

Users of EXPRES will find contact information for the PI on the [EXPRES instrument page](#).

General Information

Also, the observer will want to become familiar with the LDT Observer Information pages, which is referenced in the Call for Proposals and the message announcing the schedule release, and can be found at:

<https://confluence.lowell.edu/display/LDTO/>

Facility information, and instrument guides are all linked from that web page, as well as the telescope calendar.

For each of the instruments, the intent is to have written documentation on their use. Manuals are available from the drop-down menu above for LMI, DeVeney and NIHTS. Details on the instruments and pointers to contact information and documentation for Visitor/PI instruments are contained on the [Instrumentation main page](#). All observers should read the relevant manuals for the instruments they plan to use. Observers are responsible for the oversight and implementation of their science observations.

At the LDT, a Lowell telescope operator (TO) is responsible for running the facility. This includes being attentive to safe operations. The TOs are all trained on basic operations of the instruments, but levels of familiarity will vary among them. They also typically do the basic instrument modifications (filter swaps in LMI, grating changes for DeVeney). Please note that as a safety policy, Lowell does not support material changes at night (*i.e.*, TOs won't swap gratings or change out filters during the night) because of the potential to damage something. As always, it is not fair to ask the TOs for science judgments (*i.e.*, they can tell you HOW one can set up to do flats, but not which is BEST for your science - that is a judgment the observer must make).

In addition to the TOs, LDT Night Operations Manager Jose Fernandez, LDT Scientist Stephen Levine, LDT Support Astronomer Timothy Ellsworth-Bowers, Operations Manager/COO Amanda Bosh, Engineering Manager Frank Cornelius, Electrical Engineer Mike Sweaton, Head of Instrumentation Ryan Hamilton, and some of the engineers are on call to the TOs at night, at least until midnight normally, and anytime for serious problems. If there are telescope/facility problems they will usually call Frank, Mike or Stephen. If there are issues with the instruments, some members of the instrument group are often on-line at night and may provide assistance.