

Theatre People: LX Technician

LX sounds like “elec” which is short for electricians! These technicians are specialized in everything needed on the technical side to bring the artistic vision of a lighting designer to life. A member of the LX crew may be employed on a casual basis, an independent contractor who takes calls show by show to work for hours or days on an installation. Most theatres employ at least one venue technician who works at the theatre full time during the season (MTC has a Head of Lighting and a Head of Audio for example.) Many, but not all, calls for technicians on a casual basis in Winnipeg go through the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, the local “backstage union.”

Tasks and activities in a typical day

Tasks vary whether you are a casual crew member or in residence at a theatre, but some things that an LX crew member does regularly are:

- Collaborating with a lighting designer about the best equipment to achieve certain effects (Head LX)
- Ordering or renting instruments, gel, gobos, etc (Head LX)
- Supervising a team, scheduling people, and managing a budget (Head LX)
- Participating in or supervising hanging and focusing lighting equipment
- Programming cues into the lighting board, running the board during a show
- Performing maintenance and making sure equipment functions correctly
- Keeping up to date with technology
- Practicing good safety procedures
- Operating a follow-spot



10 skills that a lighting technician uses:

- Time management
- Organization
- Working as a team and independently
- Communication and collaboration
- Inventory management
- Technical drawing/drafting and reading plans
- Knowledge of lighting equipment, control systems, and software
- Safety awareness
- Troubleshooting technical issues
- Attention to detail

Building Abilities

There are probably lots of things you are already doing, and things you can start to do, that will serve you in a career as a lighting technician. Some of these are:

- Learn more about equipment and systems! Join a school theatre program or community group and volunteer in the areas that interest you. You can also check out systems like ETC online – they have virtual lighting boards you can practice with – and find videos on YouTube. Practice is the best way to learn these skills.
- Find an organizational system that works for you to track different tasks and projects.
- Observe the world around you. Try to notice different light angles, colours, and shadows and why they exist.
- See and participate in theatre whenever you can, and watch movies and TV! See if you can figure out how the lighting effects were achieved.
- Take care of your body. LX technicians ask a lot of their eyes and bodies, so knowing ways to rest and rejuvenate that work for you is important.