

Guidelines for Resolving City Permit Concerns

1) Permit requests from cities have become few in number because Life Chain is widely understood and established across America, Canada, and several other nations. Cities have come to respect Life Chain's First Amendment rights and the good behavior of Chainers. Cities seeking to charge for permits are rare, less than half of 1 percent. In 2010, Life Chain involved 1500 U.S. and Canadian cities and towns.

2) When cities initially require a permit, the Coordinator should be diplomatic, informed, sufficiently patient, and appropriately resolute. If the permit carries no charge and the Coordinator does not want to contest the city's request, the national Life Chain office does not pursue the matter. But Life Chain does oppose payment for permits because Life Chaining is a First Amendment right that Americans do not have to purchase; and if citizens do not defend their rights, we risk losing them.

3) A "Legal Letter" that sets forth Life Chain's First Amendment rights is available at www.NationalLifeChain.org and at www.LifeChain.net for a Life Chain Coordinator to share with city officials. In the early years (after 1987), permit requests were not uncommon, yet Life Chain's need for legal assistance was infrequent because Coordinators were able to work through the process satisfactorily. Life Chain acknowledges the enormous responsibility held by city officials (and especially police departments), and we are obligated to confer patiently and civilly with them. Permit problems most often arise in cities that are new to Life Chain, and small towns are more likely to request permits than large cities.

4) Cities that initially seek payment for permits usually confuse Life Chain with a parade, which requires exclusive use of a street and its intersections for a designated period of time. Life Chain, however, controls no territory. We are pedestrians, not paraders. We occupy a portion of the city sidewalk and permit all other pedestrians to share the sidewalk with us. While standing, we follow the strict Code of Conduct printed on the back of the approved signs we hold. Seven signs were approved for use in 2010.

5) Life Chainers are law-abiding citizens. Since Life Chain's founding in 1987, the national office has no record of a single instance in which a Chainer has been cited for illegal activity. Over 16,000 Chains have been held in the U.S. and Canada, including all states in the U.S. and all provinces in Canada.

6) In 2010, one city requested a "protest permit," having deemed Life Chain a "protest" activity. To the contrary, Life Chain has always been promoted as a "prayer chain" and an "extension of Sunday morning worship (*Life Chain Manual*)—which is why **National Life Chain Sunday** is always held on Sunday afternoon. Moreover, we clearly state the first duty of Life Chain is to "minister" to the participants (the Chainers), who represent the local church in each city or town (*Christians Should Attend the Local Life Chain: Seven Reasons Why* and *Life Chain Principles*) and who should willingly receive the ministry God has for them (2 Chronicles 7:14) as followers of Christ. Accordingly, we

urge pastors to “prepare their people” for a time of prayer and solemn reflection. Prayer topics are printed on the back of the approved signs we hold.

7) A local attorney who supports Life Chain can sometimes be helpful, if needed, but it is best for the Coordinator to work directly with city officials. The process is usually an educational one, during which officials gain an understanding of Life Chain, including its history. Substantial use of a legal firm that specializes in constitutional law has not been necessary for over a decade.

8) For the record, Coordinators are urged (*Life Chain Manual* and other communications) to contact their local police departments, to notify them about when, where, and during what time period their Life Chains will occur. Coordinators should do as a courtesy and in recognition of the police departments’ accountability as well as their responsibility. Thereafter, Chainers should do all they reasonably can to prove their good citizenship and to prevent conflicts that burden the police force.

9) When meeting with city officials, a Coordinator may find a laptop computer helpful, by accessing www.LifeChain.net and permitting officials to observe the posted Chains in each and every locale of interest. Officials can also review and assess Life Chains’ two websites as they desire: www.LifeChain.net and www.NationalLifeChain.org.

10) It is most needful that permit issues be fully resolved before Life Chains are held. Fortunately, Chains are rarely delayed beyond the scheduled date, and a spirit of goodwill eventually prevails among all conferees. That is what Life Chain seeks, in each instance.

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