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# Chill doesn't dampen parade

## High winds force change of route

**BY TONY RAAP**

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Blustery winds and choppy waters plagued the 24th annual Parade of Lights Saturday, forcing organizers to alter the parade route to keep water from spilling aboard the boats. Still, several thousand people came to watch the event despite the winds. Spectators bundled up in winter coats and scarves, huddling around bonfires to keep warm. Several watched the parade from their cars in Rotary Park's parking lot. Jay Nicholas sat on a bench with his wife and children near the London Bridge Resort. The family was draped under a blanket as the boats floated by. "Awesome, but a little too cold," Nicholas said of the parade. The National Weather Service reported 30-40 mph winds near the lake. Because of this, organizers decided to abbreviate the parade route. The boats were supposed to circle around Crazy Horse Campgrounds, but instead made a U-turn after sailing under the London Bridge. Several entries pulled out because of the wind but in all, the parade had 56 boats, parade chairwoman Tammy Kastelz said. They sailed 10 at a time to prevent bunching up in the Channel. "They did an amazing job," she said of the entrants. "Hopefully, everybody enjoyed the parade." Though no one kept an official tally, Kastelz estimated several thousand were on hand. Lawn chairs were stacked two rows deep near the London Bridge. Large crowds lined the English Village's shops and balconies, spilling over to the London Bridge Resort where spectators bellied up to the iron-chained guardrails. The crowds began forming about an hour and a half before the parade began. By 5:30 p.m., Rotary Park's parking lot was nearly full. At London Bridge Beach, people cooked s'mores around a bonfire as Christmas music blared through a loudspeaker. "This looks like a NASCAR tailgating party," a voice said over the PA system. At 6:30, the first boats sailed down the Channel. Joe Nichols enjoyed the parade from a bench on the shore's east side. "I've never seen anything like it before in my life," said Nichols, who was visiting from Tucson. Farther north, Ken and Karen Burge were nestled under a blanket. "I think it's great. I'm freezing, but I'm glad I came," Karen said. Shugrue's Restaurant & Bar will host awards brunch today at 10:30 a.m. Cash prizes ranging from \$200 to \$400 will be awarded based on best use of lights, color, theme, etc. Mayor Mark Nexsen helped judge the contest. "It was very cold, but I thought it was very well done. It was a lot of fun," he said.