

Burn Perimeter Briefing - Man + Temple

Welcome to the burn perimeter! Whether this is your first time or your fifteenth, here are the things you need to know when standing the line. Remember the golden rules: have fun, be good to people, and stay safe out there. See you at the rally point!

Equipment and Prep

You are showing up to a major combustion event. An effigy will burn, parts of it might explode and you get a front row seat. Woot! While there, **you may be standing in the same place for up to four hours (or more!)** A certain amount of equipment and preparation is in order.

Equipment

Many of the items on this list are driven by a simple fact; fire sometimes falls from the sky upon you. Sparks, embers, burning chunks of wood, wayward fireworks, fire tornadoes and surges of heat can make it as far as the perimeter. Hilarity ensues.

A word on clothing: natural fibers are your friend. They singe while artificial fibers melt. Denim, wool and newer (2011 issue or later) Ranger shirts are all good choices.

Keep in mind that you might have to be nimble on short notice. If you normally wear a complicated outfit that's hard to run in, consider going simple for a burn perimeter.

- Long sleeved ranger shirt, Ranger hat
- Simple outfit that covers you. Layers are good.
- Comfortable, insulating, protective footwear, like an old pair of boots.
- Clear goggles
- Full water bottle
- High intensity flashlight. Leave your mini-mag at camp.
- Dust mask
- Jacket (optional, but highly recommended)
- Small food items (optional, but again recommended)
- Kneepads (optional, but you'll be glad you did)

Bring your event radio if you have one. Do not check one out from HQ.

Preparation

As with any Ranger activity you have volunteered for, we expect you to be on time at HQ for sign-in, fully fed and rested and sharing consensual reality.

Further, you want to make sure you are well hydrated, have taken care of any toilet needs and are generally ready to be standing in one place for hours after sundown without any support infrastructure or chance to head to the portos. You can't swing by your camp on this shift so bring snack food and warm layers.

Communication and Overall Structure

The Rangers organize a burn perimeter by quadrants. The quads are:

Quad 1 - 12:00 to 3:00

Quad 2 - 3:00 to 6:00

Quad 3 - 6:00 to 9:00

Quad 4 - 9:00 to 12:00

All quads are centered around the effigy, whether it be the Man or the Temple. Generally quads 2 & 3 have a heavier crowd. Quad 1 tends to be downwind. Buckle up!

You will be assigned to one of these quads under the oversight of an experienced quad lead, who will normally have a person helping them called a second.

All communication goes through your quad lead or the second. If you have an event radio, you would be well advised to turn it off. Do not transmit on your radio, period. Your quad leads will be feeding you information about the burn as they receive it. If you need their attention, turn on your flashlight and point it at them.

You and Your Crowd

There's a ritual to setting a perimeter that we're not going to get into here. If you haven't done this before, talk to your quad lead and follow their directions. At the end of it, you'll be roaming one small section of dirt that is part of a really big circle, waiting for folks to filter in.

Crowd Control

Here we come to the heart of this thing. We're zen enough to know we can't control anyone, but we can encourage them to control themselves. To that end, we engage participants one at a time, as they come. Do that Ranger thing. Get to know them. Be a good host. Ask them to sit down and scoot together. Don't order anyone around.

NEVER LEAVE YOUR SECTION. Do not wade into the crowd to deal with something, do not wander off from your position to talk to someone. Once you are set on the perimeter, stay there. If you need to leave the line for any reason, tell your lead or second.

Goals

To help you build a safe perimeter, you have a number of concrete goals for your section:

- Get the crowd seated on the playa for at least 5 rows deep, preferably 10+.
- Keep tripping hazards out of the crowd.
- Discourage idiocy like fighting and laser pointers at eye level.
- Encourage things like joy, connection, awe and wonder.
- **No one without a burn laminate gets past the perimeter.**

You and Your Crowd, Continued

There are two reasons we want the crowd seated as far back as we can reasonably encourage, the first is that it makes it easier for people to see and it discourages jockeying for a better view, which creates disgruntlement. The second is that it helps stop runners.

Tripping hazards in the crowd are a real pain in the ankle. The common ones are bikes, chairs and tripods. Use your judgment, but in general we like to have these not in the first five rows. Bikes are the worst: get them 100 feet out if you can. If someone is reluctant to move one of these items and doesn't seem a good sport, get one of your quad leads involved.

Photographers will be trying to set up tripods right on the perimeter. Most will be cool about it. Use your judgment. Small tripods that don't block the view of the crowd are fine.

The odds are high that someone will try to get in the perimeter without a laminate. They might brandish a media pass or have a great story full of names you might recognize. **If they don't have a burn laminate or law enforcement credentials, they aren't supposed to be in the perimeter, period, full stop.** There aren't any exceptions to this. Attempt to stop anyone coming in, but do not lay hands on them. If someone absolutely bulls past you, flag down your quad lead or the nearest Sandman, who will be happy to discuss the matter with them.

Pro Tips for Dealing with Your Crowd:

There are many, many creative and interesting ways of engaging your crowd that individual Rangers have developed over the years, from sing-alongs to trivia contests to simply chatting honestly and making new friends. Here are a few common pro tips:

- You aren't a cop or paid security. Don't act like it. Social capital is our currency.
- Engage everyone near the front personally. Be warm and welcoming.
- Ask for what you need from the crowd. Empower them to be part of the solution.
- Maintain situational awareness while engaging your section. Don't get tunnel vision.
- Explain to your first few rows that **they** are the perimeter, not the tape and cones. They are helping keep everyone behind them safe and happy.
- Check in regularly with the Rangers next to you. Be brief and professional.

Runners

Occasionally people will take it into their heads to try to run into the fire. Your job is to try to stop this and your main tools are your crowd and social pressure. If everyone is seated close together, it is hard for a runner to really get going.

If a runner does make a break for it, **do not lay hands on them.** There are lots of reasons for this. Don't do it. Instead we have a specially trained group of Rangers called Sandmen who will be between you and the fire and it is their job to abruptly discourage forward motion in runners. If a runner breaks, stay in place and spotlight them with your flashlight. Keep an eye out for copycats while your friendly Sandmen take care of the runner.

When the Burn Starts

At some point the effigy will catch fire. Fire is pretty. Don't look at the fire; look at your crowd. Honestly, after you have seen a few burns, the sense of wonder and joy on the crowd's faces is far more interesting. More importantly, you have volunteered to keep them safe, not watch the burn. What you are watching for is runners or the crowd starting to surge forward.

Another thing we traditionally do as Rangers is take one knee as soon as the fire starts. This gives the crowd a good view and allows us to move rapidly. Don't sit all the way down, you might need to stand in a hurry. We will talk about that in the next section.

The Best Laid Plans

Once in a while, things go sideways. The two main ones we need to worry about are the fire getting a bit rambunctious and the perimeter breaking.

It's common for wind or convection currents to blow the heat and some sparks from the fire toward a particular part of the perimeter. As far as the crowd goes, this is a self-correcting problem. People surge backwards away from the heat and sparks. Encourage them to move with caution and care. Maintain a calm composure and they will follow your lead. When the embers cool and the crowd flows back, remind them where the line is and invite them to sit. Do not re-establish the line farther away from the effigy; it makes things needlessly complicated.

Another problem, which is unusual, is that the perimeter can break before it is actually dropped. If you have done a good job with your crowd, this is unlikely; they trust you when you tell them that you need their help to hold because of a medical or safety issue.

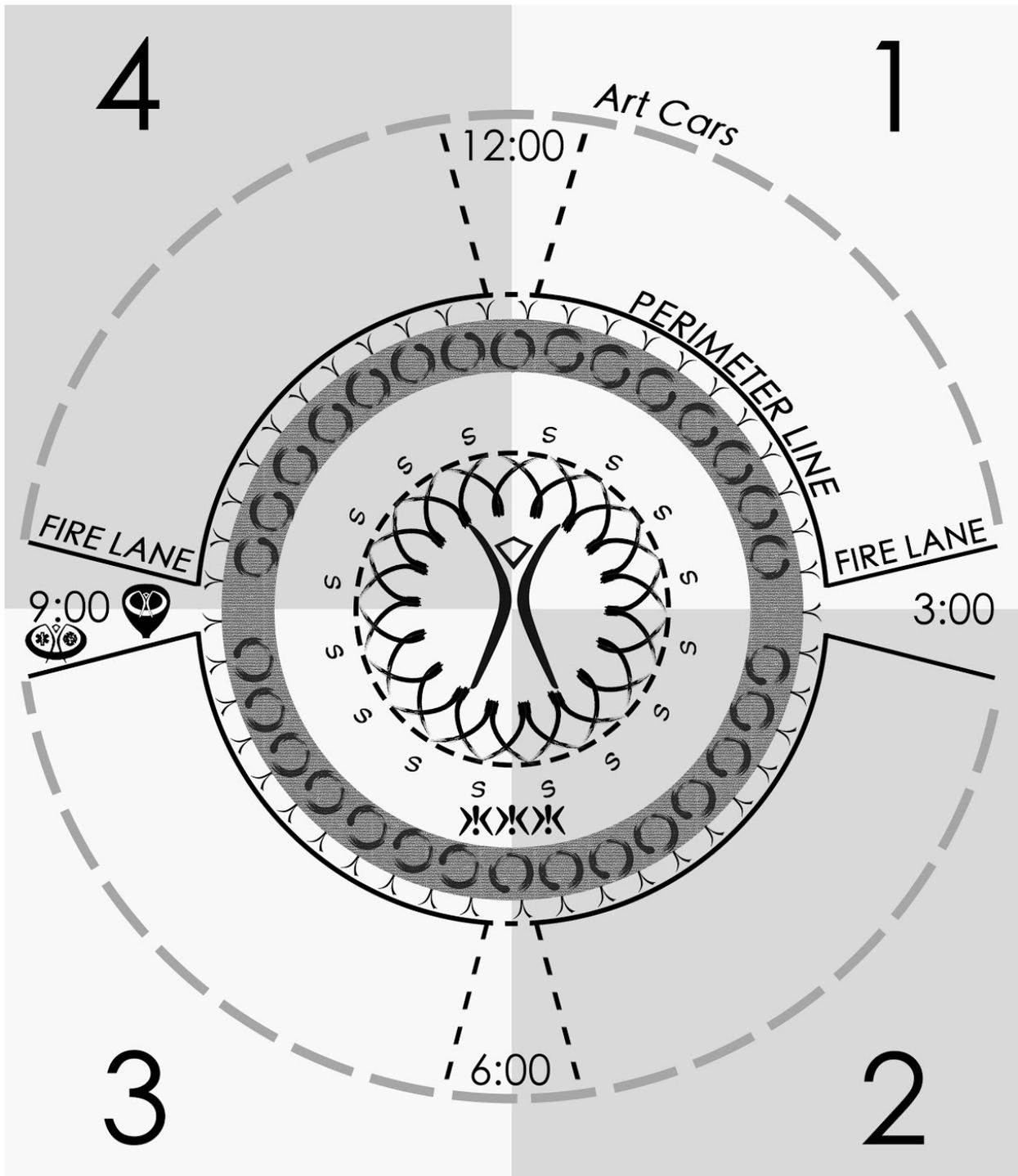
If it does break and your crowd surges toward the fire, don't try to stop them by standing in their way. Your safety is priority one, not getting trampled. Hold your section for as long as you can, then get out of the way and stay safe. If you can't see your fellow Rangers or Quad Lead, head to your rally point. If you have an event radio that you have turned off for the burn, turn it back on and listen for any instructions.

All Good Things...

At some point, Incident Command will call perimeter drop. At that point, turn your radio on if you have it, stay out of the way of the crowd, and proceed immediately to your quad's rally point (which will be established before the burn starts). **DO NOT SKIP GOING TO THE RALLY POINT.** Your quad mates can't leave until all of you are accounted for.

If you have problems finding the rally point, wait for the crowd to thin and listen for your quad mates to start calling for you. Use your radio sparingly if you have one. Once everyone is accounted for, your quad lead will release you to clock out at HQ. Good work, Ranger!

One Last Note: If you have questions about anything, talk to your Quadrant Lead or contact Judas or Leeway. Both have email addresses of the form <handle>[@burningman.com](mailto:burningman.com).



- 人 = Perimeter Ranger
 火/医 = Fire/Medical I.C.
 火 = Fire Artist / Conclave
 S = Sandman
 心 = Inner Perimeter
 心 = Ranger I.C.
 K = Staff Area