

The ART of Art Car Wrangling

FIRST THINGS FIRST: AN OVERVIEW OF THE ART CAR WRANGLERS

Who the Wranglers Are: The Art Car Wranglers are foot, bike and vehicle-mobile teams of Rangers that establish, maintain and manage the Mutant Vehicle, or Art Car, Zones for Art Cars parked behind participants during large Burn events and, most importantly, the Man and Temple Burns. Wranglers support the Burn Perimeter Rangers in helping to manage participant crowds from the backside, and team with Intercept Rangers to monitor Art Car movement to and from the burns.

Wrangler Qualities: An Art Car Wrangler is a Ranger toasted - ideally but not necessarily - by at least a year of Burn Perimeter Ranger experience, so as to have an understanding of the basic dynamics of a large Burn event. The essential elements of every Wrangler are great situational awareness, a willingness to actively engage participants, and an ability to be Ranger calm and creative in the midst of what can become some very real chaos.

Wrangler Duties: The Wranglers are in near-constant motion in the hours leading up to the burn, monitoring Art Cars as they arrive from all over the playa and jockey for the best viewing spots. They assist and educate Art Car drivers and crews on the proper placement of their vehicles (explained in greater detail below.) Wranglers may have to mediate disputes between participants and Art Cars, sometimes under very noisy and crowded conditions.

Quadrant Patrol: Wranglers ride or walk in pairs, each pair managing an entire quadrant from end to end with other Wrangler teams. They come to know the Art Cars and their crews on their frequent passes through their Quad, and sometimes will enlist the aid of these crews to help assist in the placement of other Art Cars, should they appear a little lost. As the need arises, a Wrangler team may be called to address a situation in an adjoining quad.

Wrangler Support: Backing the Wrangler quadrant teams is the Wrangler Lead, who is vehicle-mobile and slowly circles around the entire burn perimeter, monitoring Art Car and participant traffic and assisting the Wrangler teams in dispute mediation or the moving of Art Cars. The Lead is in constant contact with Incident Command (IC) and Intercept, and keeps the Wranglers informed of relevant Burn event information.

Large Burn events may also have a vehicle-mobile Wrangler Second, who counter-circles the Wrangler Lead, and is available to manage situations and helping to establish that Wrangler presence around the Art Car perimeter that participants become familiar with and can count on regularly passing by.

As Art Car “rush hour” approaches about an hour or so before the actual burn, and Quads 2 and 3 begin to fill in, the Second shifts attention onto those two Quads. The Lead continues to monitor the entire perimeter up through the actual burn.

GEARING UP & CHECKING IN: PREPARING FOR THE BURN

The equipment listed under the “Getting Started” section of the Burn Perimeter ART is the largely the same for the Wranglers:

- Long sleeved Ranger shirt and Ranger hat
- Jacket (optional; recommended)
- Comfortable, protective footwear
- Clear goggles
- Dust mask
- Full water bottle or camelbak
- Small food items (optional; recommended)
- Flashlight
- Bicycle (optional)

Wrangler Initial Check-in: The Art Car Wranglers rally at the same time and place, either at Ranger HQ or the burn site, as the Burn Perimeter Rangers working the Burn event that night. After the general briefing, the Wranglers hold their own briefing, where they choose their partners and the quadrants they want to patrol. If they’re at HQ, the Wranglers are released, to rally again at the burn site.

Wrangler Check-in at the Burn Site: After one final huddle, Wrangler teams deploy to their respective quadrants and begin their rounds, getting to know the various Art Cars that will fill their quads as the night progresses. The Lead and Second begin circling the entire perimeter.

LIFE OF PIE: QUADRANT DYNAMICS

Quad 1: The ember falls that accompany a large burn, and the prevailing winds that carry them, almost always head towards Q1. For this reason, the Wranglers generally keep Art Car density in Q1 the lightest of the four quads. We don’t discourage anyone from parking where they please, but we do a wind check and educate accordingly about the potential for falling embers on a particular area.

This is an especially important point that the Wranglers must make to Art Cars decked out in flammable materials parked in a potential ember fall zone:

If you are going to be here, stay with your vehicle, have a fire extinguisher at the ready, and pay attention!

Quads 2 & 3: These quads fill in fastest and the fullest first, especially with participants who have trekked out to the Burn by foot. Some time before the burn, these areas will coagulate like a massive gooey playa puddle, and Art Car movement becomes impossible. At this point, the area is considered “set” as far as Art Cars are concerned, and Wrangler focus shifts to managing the open spaces between participants, bicycle clusters and Art Cars.

Quad 4: This quad isn't as packed as Q2 or Q3, and there's adequate room for an Art Car to find a nice spot with a great view of the Art Cars and participants fleeing the embers that are raining down on them over there in Q1.

THE THIN ORANGE LINE: THE ART CAR PERIMETER

Hours before the burn, the Ranger SITE team places orange stanchions 250' from the participant perimeter line. These orange stanchions demarcate the "Orange Line", the outer perimeter for the largest Art Cars. Art Car operators should place their vehicles in front of or behind the Orange Line, according to its size, which will determine its proper placement Zone:

Extra Large Art Car (XLAC) - 35+ ft long and/or 15+ ft tall:
The XLAC Zone is behind the Orange Line

Large Art Car (LAC) - Between 20-35 ft long and/or 10-15 ft tall:
The LAC Zone is up to 50 ft inside the Orange Line

Medium Art Car (MAC) - Less than 20 ft long and/or 10 ft tall:
The MAC Zone is between 50-100 ft inside the Orange Line

Small Art Car (SAC) - Golf cart-size: The SAC Zone is up to 20 ft in front of the MAC Zone, or 120 ft inside the Orange Line, and behind seated participants

WALKING IT OFF: FINDING THE ART CAR PERIMETER ZONES

Art Cars have an unfortunate way of sometimes congregating along the Orange Line, restricting and blocking access paths for participants and other Art Cars. This is not good, especially for the small Art Cars that get blocked out behind larger Art Cars. Much of a Wrangler's attention will be on monitoring and keeping these access paths open between the largest Art Cars, and placing the smaller ones at their appropriate distances in front of them.

The best way to find that appropriate distance inside the Orange Line is to literally "walk off" the distance. By becoming a human yardstick, you can walk the appropriate number of steps in from the Orange Line to find the proper Zone for the Art Car they may be assisting.

The average human stride, or pace, covers about two to three feet. Thus, 50 feet is about 20-25 paces, and 100 feet is about 40-50 paces.

However, at some point, the participant perimeter fills in such that pacing off distance is no longer possible. The surrounding Art Cars and your best judgment will then provide a rough guide for proper vehicle placement.

Remember, you are not a Parking Control Officer. You're just making sure that everyone has a fair chance to find a good spot to see the burn. If an Art Car is outside its Zone by a little but isn't creating a problem being there, leave it alone.

CAN YOU SEE WHAT I'M SAYING?: FLASHLIGHT SIGNALING

Darkness and loud Art Car sound systems can make it difficult managing Art Car movement, especially through throngs of participants and other Art Cars. A bright flashlight can speak for you in these situations.

Signaling to Stop a moving Art Car

- From the front or side: quick plays of light across the windshield or driver's windows are usually enough to catch their attention.
- From the rear: bounce the light off the outside rear view mirror, if it has one.
- Never focus your flashlight on the driver's eyes!

Signaling Stop and Go to an Art Car

- Tell the driver to follow your flashlight, and only your flashlight.
- "MOVE – SLOWLY" -- rotate the light in a slow circular motion.
- "STOP" -- slash the light in a back and forth horizontal motion.
- "LEFT" or "RIGHT" – guide with your free hand.

Signaling to Back Up an Art Car

- One Wrangler is positioned off the left front of the Art Car, in view of the driver.
- One or more additional Wranglers stand off the rear corners, with one always in view of the front end Wrangler.
- Tell the driver to follow your flashlight, and only your flashlight.
- Using the circle/slash light technique, the back end Wranglers lead the way backwards, in a coordinated flashlight signal relay through the front end Wrangler to the driver.

PARTICIPANTS BEHAVING BADLY: COMMON ART CARS ISSUES

Most everyone is a terrific Burner about how they park their Art Cars amongst their neighbors, but the ones who aren't will usually trigger an agitated call to the Wranglers to mediate the ensuing unhappiness between participants that will be sure to follow.

Employing Ranger FLAME strategies and techniques, Wranglers seek to mediate a settlement in their own unique way, one that will make everyone reasonably happy. Hopefully, in the end, there will be hugs all around.

Here are examples of some of the challenging situations Wranglers face, and some guidelines on how you might handle them:

Art Cars with Handicap placards: These Art Cars, especially those SAC-sized, are allowed to park just behind all the seated participants so that their passengers may have a fair chance at an unobstructed view of the burn.

Blocked Views: This is the most common issue that Wranglers deal with. It happens when a late arriving Art Car snakes its way through established groups of participants and Art Cars and stops in front of them, especially as the Burn nears and space is getting tight everywhere but behind the largest Art Cars.

If space permits, guide the vehicle to a better location by leading with the aid of your flashlight, another Wrangler team or, with encouragement, a helpful Art Car crew. In tight quarters, a compromise might mean a move of just ten or fifteen feet in one direction or the other.

However, a stopped Art Car is an instant magnet for bikes, and once so magnetized, it is impossible to move. The same goes for groups of participants that choose to camp themselves around a parked Art Car. Once surrounded, let it be.

Wandering Art Cars: An Art Car wandering through a dense crowd, looking for a spot to park, may need a spotter to clear a path, so help guide the vehicle to a good location by leading it by flashlight, with the assistance of another Wrangler or Art Car crew member if needed.

Ladders: A tall ladder topped by a participant and his camera equipment, in the middle of a moving ocean of participants, is an invitation to a sky fall upon those below that is much heavier and full of hurt than any falling ember. This is especially the case if the ladder could be a tall teetering island in a sea of participants.

Educate the participant on the ladder about the dangers to body and soul being up there like that, and encourage them to relocate their ladder next to an Art Car or a group of bikes that won't mind the company, so as to create a barrier next to or around the ladder that will lessen the chances of participants running into it.

Scaffolds: The ideal place for a scaffold is one that is appropriate for its height relative to what's around it, but they have a tendency to quickly go up somewhat closer. There's not much to be done about a scaffold once it's up and filled with participants. But they make great neighbors for that ladder you might find all by its lonesome not too far away.

Film Crew Cherry Pickers: They are usually very good about their placement. Make sure there is enough space for participant movement all around the rig. The area surrounding the cherry picker should be cordoned off, and some film crews might have their own site monitors.

Fire, Medical or Experiential Emergencies: In the event of an emergency, the Wranglers might be the first Rangers able to first-respond to the situation.

As per standard Ranger procedure:

- Contact the Wrangler Lead, who will then notify IC
- Secure a safety perimeter around the situation
- Enlist the aid of helpful participants, if possible
- Signal arriving backups, Green Dots/Troubleshooters or EMT/LE by rotating your flashlight overhead, in a steady circular motion
- Remain on-site until released by the Wrangler Lead
- Resume Wrangling your quad

I'M TELLING ON YOU!: REPORTING ART CAR VIOLATIONS

Aside from the standard rules regarding Art Cars on the playa, Burn events carry their own special set of guidelines, as mentioned above. Being a bit over a perimeter line is not an issue, in and of itself, especially if no one is affected.

But being over the line and blocking views, while being a jerk about it, is serious. This is especially true for bad behavior of the driving kind, which has a nasty way of endangering participants, many of who might be sitting on the playa.

Every Wrangler has the discretion to report the poor behavior of an Art Car and its driver or crew to the DMV. Should you find the need to do so, provide the Lead with the following information: Description of the offending Art Car, its permit number and time, location and nature of the offending behavior, regardless of the resolution of the situation.

The Lead will forward this information to Intercept, which is the Ranger liaison to the DMV, and the DMV will act upon it accordingly.

IT'S SHOWTIME, FOLKS!: AWARENESS DURING THE BURN

The main Wrangler concern during the actual burn is an ember falling on an unattended Art Car and setting it on fire. It has happened.

During the burn, the Wrangler teams, still in their respective quadrants, get to watch the burn, while still keeping a watchful eye on their Quad. However, all teams should be aware of the direction of the ember fall towards a particular quad, especially in high winds, and should be prepared to assist in the safe movement of participants and Art Cars away from the falling embers.

Self-preservation is usually motive enough for Art Cars and participants to move out from under an ember fall. Still, it's good to scan the crowd for Art Cars to see that they are accompanied by their crews with their diligent eyes on the falling embers. If you encounter an unattended Art Car under an ember fall, stay with or keep an eye on it until their crew returns.

It is not your responsibility to put out a fire, should one start, on an Art Car. Report the fire to the Wrangler Lead, who will contact IC. Create a large perimeter around the burning vehicle, and wait for the firefighters and law enforcement to arrive, and they will handle the situation.

AFTER THE FALL: POST-BURN CHECKOUT

The Wranglers are released at the discretion of the Wrangler Lead. Their decision will be based on the outflow of Art Cars and participants after the burning art piece falls, but before the main perimeter drops.

You do not have to gather at a rally point. Checkout is by radio with the Lead. However, shift checkout or duty changeover still occurs at Ranger HQ.