

INTRODUCTION

If you or your group decides to build a float, there are several things that must be taken into consideration, such as the type and theme of the parade, how much money is to be spent on the float, what paperwork will be needed to enter, the type of vehicle that will move the float along the parade route, float design, acquisition of materials, how many and who will ride on the float, the place where the float will be built, moving the float to the parade, last minute repairs, and the potential problems that may occur before, during and after the parade. The more planning and decisions that are made in advance, the easier the work along the way will be.

TYPE & THEMES OF PARADES

Determine the type and theme of the parade, the date it will be held, what kind of weather to expect and the exact time it will start. This information will be important to you, as it will influence the type and design of decorations and costumes. Most parades have themes, and many sponsors will want the float to reflect it. If you want to publicize your organization, you may have to do it in subtle ways.

FUNDING

A float will take money to build no matter what size or how detailed the design is. Decide on how much to budget and where the money is coming from before the float is started. This way everyone will know what can be spent. If a sponsor is secured for the float, permission might have to be obtained from the float committee. There are many ways corners can be cut, vehicles, float chassis and materials may be obtained on a

loan basis or found in many places for little or nothing. If you publicize the things you need among your group, they may have what you need or can recommend an economical source.

PAPERWORK

As soon as the decision is made to have a float, someone should be appointed to contact the parade sponsors for any forms to fill out. Usually the parade organizers will have a list of rules, guidelines or do's and don'ts. These are necessary for your planning effort. Be sure the deadlines are known and the completed paperwork is submitted in a timely manner.

TYPES OF VEHICLES

The sponsoring parade committee may have specific rules pertaining to the type of vehicles that are allowed in the parade, so check with them before you begin. A pickup and trailer are used in many hometown parades. The vehicle must be in sound mechanical condition. Be sure to decorate the towing vehicle to make it attractive and part of the total exhibit.

FLOAT DESIGN

If time permits, a design contest might be worthwhile. As a reward, the person who submitted the winning design might be selected to be the first to ride, walk beside, or dance on the float. As you plan the design, have someone sketch or draw it, so everyone will see the plan and may suggest something that will improve the design. Some of the design criteria to take into consideration are: music, lights, power source, weight, parade route, stability, storage of the float, loading and unloading of people, and safety. When

you finish, check to see if you have met the rules of the parade committee. Other things that must be taken into consideration are the size, the type of vehicle that will move it, how far it must be moved to get to the parade, and how many people will be on the float.

MATERIALS

Develop a list of the materials you will need, do not forget the materials that will be needed to make the framework. Where weather is a factor, plan on the worst then you will be prepared for anything. Gather the tools and materials before meeting to build the float as it is a waste of the workers time if all the required materials are not available. Don't forget the little things like glue, nails, staples, etc. Contact the local merchants, hardware stores, department stores and other sources that may donate or lend materials for your float.

WHO WILL RIDE

If you plan to have someone on the float, you must decide how many and who. This may be difficult as you do not want to hurt anyone's feelings and too many people will make it look crowded. Also you must decide what costumes are to be worn. If you have the participants wear Square Dance costumes, plan ahead so you will have colors that are in harmony with each other.

WHERE TO BUILD THE FLOAT

The place where the float is to be built is very important. Try to find a place where the float can remain throughout the construction of it. It needs to be inside and can be locked up so materials, tools, and equipment will be secure. Be sure and measure the height of

the entrance that it will be taken out of, so you will not build something on your float that will prevent it from going through the door. Allow lots of room, as constructing a float and adding decorations takes a lot of space. Make it a "FUN" project with refreshments.

WORKERS

Decide how many helpers you will need and what they will do. Too many workers will get in the way of each other and too few workers will make work out of a fun project. Proper planning and guidance are essential, so that all workers will know what to do and can start working immediately upon their arrival.

MOVING THE FLOAT

There may be considerable distance between where you build the float and the location of the parade. Check with local law officials to preclude problems to and from the parade. You will have to travel slowly because of the decorations. Plan the decorations so you can tack them in place after you get to the parade or fix them so that they will not get blown off.

LAST MINUTE REPAIRS

Be sure to take plenty of tools, glue, staples, extra decorations, etc. to the parade site to repair any damage done to the float in transit. Assign one or two people to be responsible for bringing a repair kit to the parade site.

PARADE GOALS

If you want a trophy or the prize money then you must follow the theme and obey the rules. To publicize and promote Square Dancing, you can combine the theme and

square dancing by having signs or passing out handouts.

IDEAS TO HELP

Before you start make sure your float is compliant with all Local, State and Federal Regulations.

Instead of using crepe paper use colored plastic bags, as they won't wilt or fade if it rains. Square Dancers walking in a parade are colorful. If the parade is at night, use lots of shiny materials, so that you get lots of reflection. Chicken wire is very helpful in constructing or decorating a float because you can bend it to a shape or form and put things, such as tissues, paper towels, etc. in the holes. Be sure to always MEASURE TWICE, CUT ONCE, it will save you time, money, arguments, and frustration. If the float is to be used year after year, it is recommended that letters be made from wood, metal or plastic. A gas generator can be used to run the music and lights. Most are noisy, so if it can be covered with insulation and hidden, it will help reduce the noise but remember it will need lots of air. If dancing on the float is planned, by all means plan some kind of safety device, such as a railing, fence, poles, etc.

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SQUARE DANCE FLOATS



This information sheet was developed by the Education Committee of the UNITED SQUARE DANCERS OF AMERICA, INC. and will provide a brief summary of just a few of the topics concerning the development, construction and use of floats for promotion of the square dance activity.

Leadership Education material can also be printed directly from USDA web site at www.usda.org