



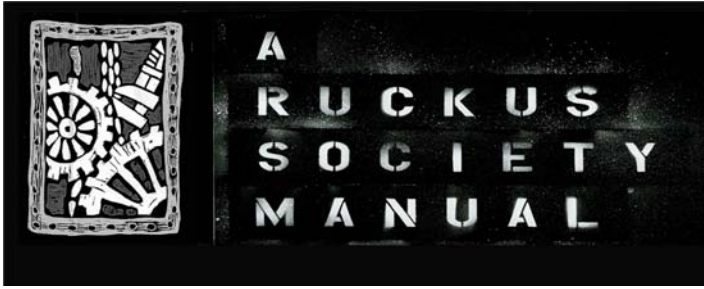
BALLOON

BANNER

ACTION

MANUAL

THE RUCKUS SOCIETY



This manual describes in detail how to coordinate a balloon banner, using two weather balloons, and a screen & fabric banner between approx 150sq ft and 350 sq ft. For smaller or larger banners, the same principles apply, but obviously the timeline, action team size, number of balloons, and amount of gear/equipment will need to be adjusted.

**A note of caution:** Balloon banners should not be attempted in high wind or severe weather conditions. You should never walk with a deployed balloon banner, or plan to move the banner over a large distance- it's too hard to walk with the balloons safely. Finally, for safety reasons, it's not a good idea to deploy a balloon banner in a high-tension situation- where there are threats of police action or the crowd is unpredictable.

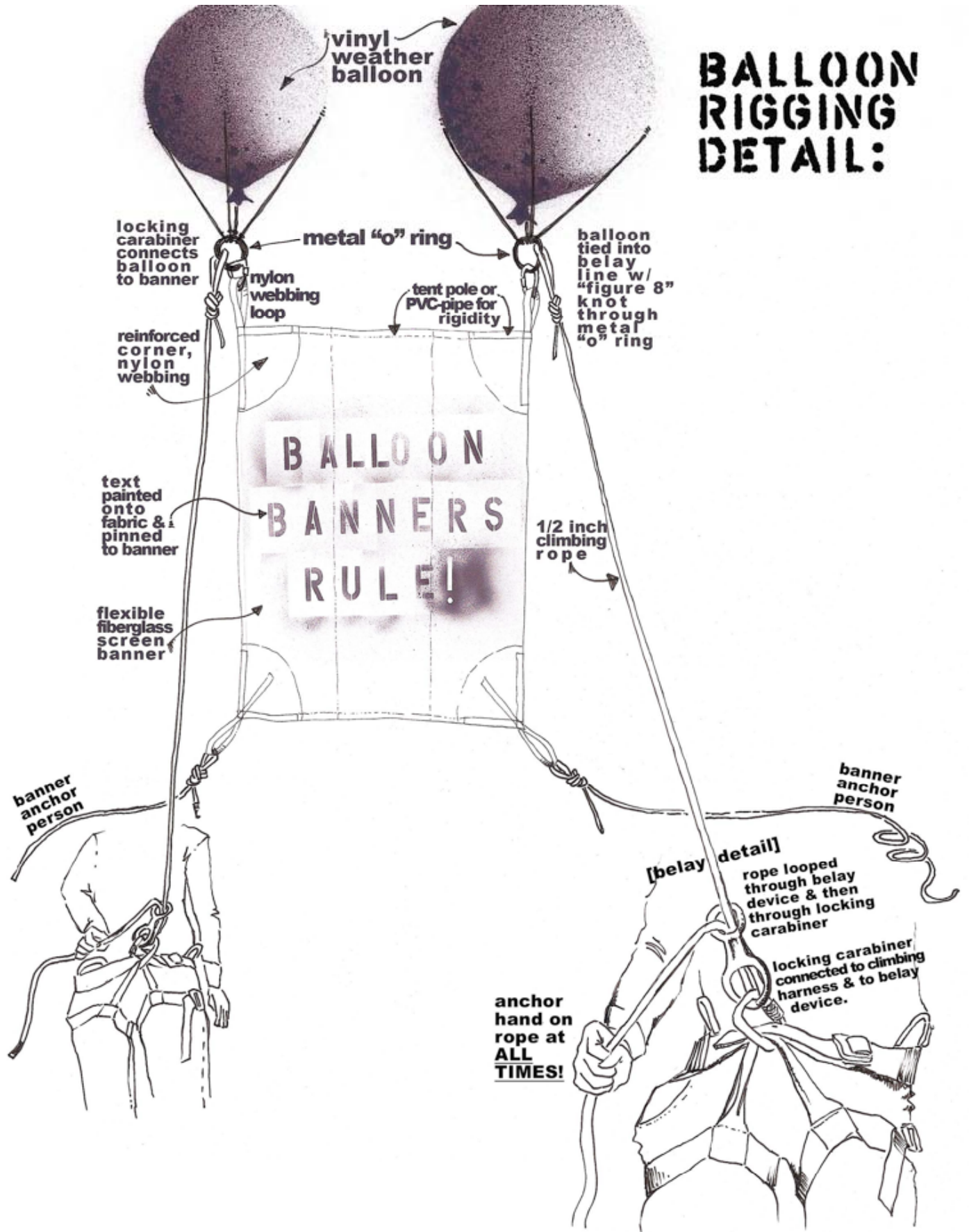
The Ruckus Society. 2007  
Written by Hannah Strange  
Illustrations and Graphic Design by Cy Wagoner

## GEAR LIST & ESTIMATED BUDGET:

2 weather balloons (10 ft diameter, can lift 23 pounds each)	\$1000 (\$500 each)
5 K-size tanks helium (need 1000 cubic feet total)	\$500 (\$100 each)
2 lengths of plastic tubing w/ threaded attachment on one end, same size as nozzle on tanks.	\$5
Banner (See diagram for sewing instructions. Materials below)	\$ 150 total (labor not incl.)
Flexible fiberglass screen (at any hardware store-sold by the foot or prepackaged)	\$100
Nylon flat webbing	\$5
1" Tubular Nylon webbing	\$5
Lightweight nylon or cotton fabric	\$10
Latex House paint	\$10
Safety pins	\$2
2 PVC pipes or tent poles.	\$15
2 climbing ropes (50 ft each, at least 5mm thick)	\$30
2 bundles parachute-cord (at least 100 ft total length)	\$5
4 locking carabineers	\$40
2 climbing harnesses	\$80
2 belay devices	\$30
duct tape	\$2
masking tape	\$2
sharpies	\$3
scissors	\$2
water	\$5
snacks	\$5
mini first aid kit	\$10
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$1870 approx</b>

*\*note: This budget includes gear and material cost only. You may want to pay your action team and banner-maker. Vehicle rental may be necessary.*

# BALLOON RIGGING DETAIL:



## **BALLOON BANNER ACTION ROLES:**

**Action coordinator:** assembles the action team, and communicates roles and action plan to action team. Scouts action site, gets gear, banner, and equipment together. Coordinates set-up and deployment of banner on the action day. During action, makes sure banner and action team are safe & easily visible for photographs. \*Should be the ONLY person the balloon anchors listen to about banner location or height adjustments\*. Decides when to take down the banner. Provides support for action team wherever needed.

**Balloon anchors:** *(2 people)* During the action, these two people wear climbing harnesses and control the height and location of the balloons using the belay devices.

**Balloon supports:** *(2 people)* Provide any support needed to balloon anchors, from holding water and food, to helping position the balloons and talking to police or crowd if needed, so the balloon anchor doesn't get distracted. May also hold lines attached to the top of the banner if needed due to wind or weather conditions.

**Banner anchors:** *(2 people)* Hold the lines attached to the bottom of the banner, control the position and angle of the banner.

**Media liaison:** Coordinates with any media who want to interview banner crew or other action spokespeople. Provides media with press packets. May also document the action (photo & written) for independent media and publicity purposes.

**Police liaison:** Negotiates with the police or other law enforcement on behalf of the action team, so that the team doesn't get distracted and can safely play their roles.

**Prep crew:** At least four volunteers or members of the action crew, who help set up the balloons and banner the day of the action.

# BALLON BANNER ACTION TIMELINE:

## WEEKS BEFORE ACTION

### Action Prep:

- Assemble action team.
- Make banner,
- Rent helium tanks,
- Scout the action site for a deployment area
- Find a nearby set-up site with a route to the action site that will be easily walkable with inflated balloons (no overhanging wires, poles, trees, etc.).

## 2 HRS BEFORE DEPLOYMENT

### Equipment:

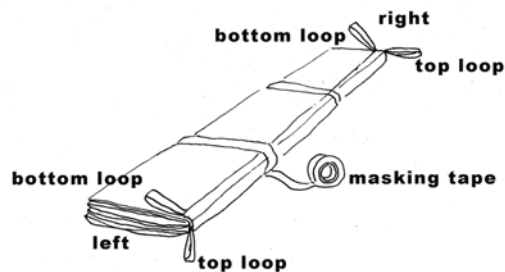
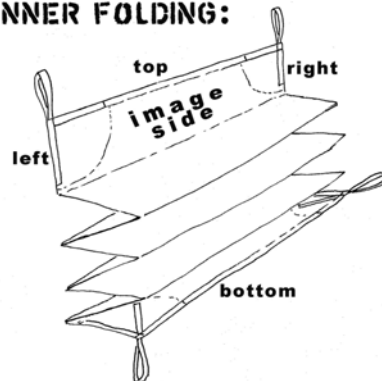
Prep crew and action coordinator arrive at set-up site with all gear & supplies.

## 1½ HRS BEFORE DEPLOYMENT

### Prep banner: (see image below)

- Insert tent poles or PVC pipes into banner sleeves
- Rig parachute-cord through grommets at corners of banner
- Fold banner accordion style so TOP of banner ends up on top of the folded stack
- Tape folded banner loosely with masking tape for easy transport to action site. Draw an arrow on the tape to indicate the front of the banner.
- Coil parachute cord, tape loosely with masking tape and label for easy identification (top right, bottom left, etc.)

### BANNER FOLDING:



## **1 HR BEFORE DEPLOYMENT**

### **Prep balloons:**

- Tie the climbing ropes into the “O”-ring on the balloon lines with a figure-8 knot
- Tie balloons down to a person or solid object before inflating
- Attach plastic tubes to helium tanks, insert into balloon and inflate! Inflate slowly at first to avoid freezing or tearing the balloon material.
- Make sure to inflate balloons fully for maximum lift, easier control and best aesthetics.

## **30 MIN BEFORE DEPLOYMENT**

### **Action Team meeting:**

- Review deployment scenario (do a quick run through if possible)
- Practice media talking points
- Clarifying questions & troubleshooting
- Pep talk! Words of encouragement!

## **10 MIN BEFORE DEPLOYMENT**

### **Walk to deployment site**

- Banner anchors carry banner
- Balloon anchors walk with balloons attached to harnesses
- Balloon support help balloon anchors navigate any obstacles
- Action coordinator carries action teams personal supplies & extra food, water, and action supplies (duct tape, etc.)

## **DEPLOY BANNER!**

### **Deployment:**

- Banner anchors place the banner on the ground with the correct side facing front and top of banner easily accessible.
- Balloon anchors attach balloon to top of banner with locking carabineers
- Banner anchors uncoil and hold onto top rigged parachute cord loops, and un-tape the banner so it can unfurl when the balloons are raised
- Balloon supports uncoil and hold onto bottom rigged parachute cord loops
- Once everyone is ready, the action coordinator calls for balloon anchors to raise up the banner!
- Adjust the height and angle of the banner as necessary based on wind, visibility, and best position for good action photographs.

## **DURING ACTION**

### **Troubleshooting**

- Take several action photos right away, to be sure you have a good visual record.
- In windy conditions, play with the height and angle of the balloons and banner to work with the wind.
- Have a clear decision-making process and way to communicate among team members.
- **Only** the action coordinator should tell the action team to make adjustments to the height, angle or location of the banner.
- Negotiate with the police or fire departments to make agreements or compromises. ***Use your best judgment, and keep the safety of the action team, crowd, and equipment as your top priority.***

## AFTER ACTION

### Clean up:

- Deflate balloons (plan for approx. 45 mins!) Hold the nozzle up for easier deflation, and twist or roll the banner to get all the helium out.
- **IMPORTANT:** It will be incredibly tempting to jump on the balloon as it's deflating. **DON'T!** The material that the balloon is made of is more delicate than you think. It could rip or pop.
- Coil ropes and parachute-cord
- Unpin fabric lettering from banner (so screen can be re-used). Fold banner carefully.
- Pack up all gear
- Quick debrief of action- highlights and points to improve
- Reminder of next steps or follow up responsibilities for action team, if applicable



# HOW TO MAKE THE BANNER:

