

BURN2 Rangers - Case Studies

by Ronon Carver

The following incidents taken from Burning Life and BURN2 incident (LSD) Reports. Names and identifying information have been changed. The purpose of these case studies is to show how the F.L.A.M.E. approach is used in BURN2 Rangers problem solving and mediation.

Adult Content: Dead Bodies Display

Issue

A Ranger walked by a camp that had displays about recent events in Asia. Included in the display were images of a dead body rotting in a pool of water and a child covered in blood. The Ranger found these images to be offensive and questioned their appropriateness with respect to Burning Life's Maturity rating. Do these images violate the Maturity ratings guidelines regarding "representations of intensely violent acts, whether or not photo-realistic (for example, depicting death, torture, dismemberment or other severe bodily harm)" and should this be considered Adult content and disallowed at Burning Life?

F.L.A.M.E.

Find out

If you are the Ranger finding the images offensive, remove yourself from the decision-making process; kick it aside to another Ranger who can review this with more objectivity. That Ranger should call in at least one other Ranger to review the images. In this instance, the Ranger recognized the images as a potential trigger issue, kicked it aside to another Ranger, and removed him/herself from the case.

Look at the purpose of the display. Is it educational? Is it violent or does it promote violence? Images of death itself are not necessarily violent. Review the maturity guidelines found at <https://support.secondlife.com/ics/support/default.asp?deptID=4417&task=knowledge&questionID=6010>. Check the existing LSD reports to see if there is already a report on this or a similar incident. If one exists, what was the outcome? Are there any facts in determining the outcome that could help you in this situation?

Listen

The investigating Ranger(s) should listen to all concerned parties, including the Ranger(s) who were offended by the images. Why does the Ranger find the images offensive? Did they trigger any hot-button issues for him/her? What was the intent of the builder, his/her purpose for placing the images? Does s/he think the images are offensive? What about the images are offensive?

Talk to the builder, find out the purpose of the display. Is it educational? Is it intended to promote violence? Do other people find the images offensive?

Analyze

How do these images fit in with the adult content policy definition? Pictures of death or the manner of the death may be considered offensive, but pictures of death in themselves do not necessarily imply an adult content rating. Are the images actually "representations of intensely violent acts, whether or not photo-realistic (for example, depicting death, torture, dismemberment or other severe bodily harm)"? The key words here are "intensely violent acts." Is the image one of an intensely violent *act* resulting in death? Or is it an image of a dead body? The death may have been caused by an intensely violent act, but if it's an image of a dead body, and not the act itself, then that does not necessarily induce an adult content rating.

Governance came in, reviewed the display, and said "...the picture would be ok to stay under Mature rather than adult as it's not violent nor is the overall theme of the exhibit adult in nature... the overall theme of the exhibit is educational and not violent... there's nothing else in this exhibit graphically or textually that promotes violence... I believe the owner would be better off changing it as ... suggested to avoid offending anyone as that's not his/her intent but I don't think she has to or is in violation of the Mature rating"

Mediate

There is no violation here; the image of the dead body is considered "mature," not "adult." The purpose of the build is educational, and by informing people about recent events, an attempt to promote peace, rather than violence. Therefore, the builder does NOT have to do anything.

However, considering the image is graphic--it is still an image of a dead body rotting in a pool of water--it could be disturbing to more people than the one Ranger. It might be in everyone's best interest, including the builder, to move the image to the inside of the display, rather than having it on the outside where it is broadly visible because the disturbing image might actually cause people to turn away. Suggest to the builder alternatives for the display where s/he could use the image, but in a different location.

Explanation

Provide an explanation to all interested parties, including the Ranger who first brought the build to everyone's attention. If the builder does not want to move the image, s/he does not have to. If the Ranger--or anyone else--finds the images offensive, s/he should look away. Be sure to include it in the LSD report so it can be used as a basis for future decisions.

Conclusion

The builder did not change her display.

Adult Content: Nude Images Display

Issue

A Ranger walked by a camp and saw a display featuring photo-realistic images of nudes. Many showed silhouettes of nude or partially nude women; some showed nearly full frontal or partial frontal nudity, including nipples and some pubic hair. The images were very artistic; sensual but not sexual. The build was that of an outdoor art gallery, with a series of circular walls made of nearly transparent material hung from posts. Does this cross the line from "mature content" into "adult content?"

F.L.A.M.E.

Find out

If you, a Ranger, find images of nudes offensive, remove yourself from the decision-making process; kick it aside to another Ranger who can review this with more objectivity. Review the Linden Lab [maturity guidelines](#). Check the existing LSD reports to see if there is already a report on this or a similar incident. If one exists, what was the outcome? Are there any facts in determining the outcome that could help you in this situation?

Because this concerns possible "adult content," the investigating Ranger should call on at least one other Ranger to assist. Both should review the images. As with Burning Man, art work with Mature themes is allowed. The human body and the adult mind are accepted, but not forced upon others.

Listen

Talk to everyone involved; let each person give his/her opinion. In this case, the artist placed the images along the back wall because there would be less traffic along the sim-edge roadway. (There was no neighboring sim.) She tried to follow the guidelines, thinking if they were on a roadway less traveled, they would be less broadly visible. And, most of the images could not be easily seen from other roadways. Moreover, the images are SENSUAL, not SEXUAL, and no genitals were visible, which should classify them as artistic, rather than pornographic.

Analyze

The issue here is really *not* whether photo-realistic images of nudes are allowed, but rather whether they are broadly visible. Because this is Burning Life, the line between "mature" and "adult" content has been stretched a bit to allow more leeway in order to more closely reflect Burning Man culture. It is not up to Rangers to determine the artistic merit of the images.

Governance came in, reviewed the display, and clarified the "mature content" guidelines for Burning Life as "...similar to that of a fashion magazine. Suggested nudity is ok, subtlety, scarce

clothing. Full frontal nudity or anything showing actual full breasts or nipples, or male/female genitals can't be broadly visible. Therefore, we will ask the artist to move the marked items to the inside of the structure where they aren't broadly visible."

The key thing to note here is the term "broadly visible." Walk around the display. Are the images visible from the roadway? Or do you have to be in the camp to see them? Unfortunately, in this instance, there were two aggravating issues: 1) the images were actually on the *outside* of the display structure, along a roadway, and 2) the display structure itself was mostly transparent; it appeared to be made of circles of transparent curtains. Unless the images were placed within the middle of the structure itself, they were pretty much broadly visible from everywhere, and there were too many to fit in the small interior circle. And, it doesn't matter that the roadway might be less traveled; it matters only if they can be broadly visible from the roadway.

Mediate

Because this is a Governance issue, there's not a lot of room for movement here. The images must be in a location that is not "broadly visible" from the roadway. Since the display structure is mostly transparent, the artist has at least three options here: 1) change the display structure so it is not transparent and move the images to the inside of the structure, or 2) change the images so no nipples or pubic hair is visible, or 3) change the size and/or location of the display so some kind of a privacy fence, screen, or hedge could be placed along the roadway areas, limiting visibility.

Explain

First, make sure YOU understand Governance's clarification of the adult content guidelines. If you don't understand it, then you will not be able to explain it to the artist.

Explain Governance's ruling to the artist and offer suggestions on ways the display could be brought within mature content guidelines. Ask the artist if s/he understands the guidelines. Offer to come back and check the display after changes have been made, just to make sure there are no further issues.

Conclusion

Because there was so little time left before Burning Life opened, the artist felt s/he had no choice but to change out the images. Therefore, s/he replaced them with images that did not contain nudity.

Griefer, or Performance Art?

Issue

A participant at one of the stages was shouting anti-American slurs and dancing with a long flag

pole (perhaps 10m long) attached to the top of her head. As she danced, the pole swung around, hitting the other participants, and the flag waved in front of the performer.

F.L.A.M.E.

Find out

Several Rangers watched the person dance and listened to her shouting anti-American slurs. The stage manager complained about the woman and requested she be removed from the event. No one else was complaining about the person. In fact, several people humorously role played getting whacked in the head by the pole, but no one made any comments or responded to the woman's remarks.

Listen

The stage manager was the only person complaining about the woman. Listen to the manager's complaints, take note of his or her comments, and observe how the incident is affecting the rest of the participants.

Analyze

No one else was complaining. The woman may have been offensive, but she wasn't bothering anyone. The flag pole was just a virtual flag pole--no one was actually getting hurt by it. Since it was phantom, it wasn't knocking anyone around. And, although the flag was waving in front of the performer, it wasn't really blocking the view because people could use camera controls or move to other locations if they were bothered.

Moreover, the woman was not violating ToS or CS. Although the stage manager had a legitimate request, Burning Man's principle of Radical Inclusion does not exclude assholes from attending. Assholes have as much right to participate as everyone else.

Mediate

Because no one else was complaining about the woman and it was easy to either ignore or mute her, Rangers chose to do nothing.

Explain

Rangers explained to the stage manager that the woman was not bothering the other participants, so she would be allowed to continue. The woman's actions were not considered grieving, but rather "performance art."

Conclusion

After about an hour of having her performance pretty much totally ignored by everyone around her, the women eventually settled down. Very soon she was sitting surrounded by a couple of Rangers and other participants, engaged in conversation. This was an example of radical inclusion at its best.

Griever, or Performance Art?

Issue

Someone was flying around the Burning Life sims rezzing particle rezzers and other objects typically used by griefers.

F.L.A.M.E.

Find out

Who was this person? Was he a member of the Burning Life Access group, the group that owned the sims? Was he a staff member? Were his actions appropriate for a Burning Life event? Were his actions disruptive to events and other participants?

Listen

Rangers attempted to contact the participant by local chat and IM, but got no response. Reports came in from staff, builders, and participants in other areas of the estate about particle rezzers and other disruptive objects being rezzed.

Analyze

Rangers checked group memberships and saw the person was not a member of any Burning Life groups. Therefore, he was not authorized to rez objects on the Burning Life sims.

The participant was a new avatar, rezzed earlier that day.

The participant had technical skills that exceeded those of a normal “n00b” avatar, such as the ability to rez objects on plots restricted to group, the ability to TP quickly from one place to another to avoid Rangers, and the knowledge of griefing objects.

The participant was using disruptive objects frequently associated with griefers.

Mediate

Rangers were not able to get a response from the person. Within minutes, the avatar’s account was canceled, but a new avatar with the same first name and a different last name appeared on the estate, mirroring the first avatar’s disruptive actions.

This is clearly a griefing incident with the goal of disrupting the Burning Life event. Rangers filed ARs, but Linden Lab employees were already on it and deleting the griever accounts before the ink was dry on the ARs.

Explain

ARs were filed, an incident report (LSD) was filed, the mess was cleaned up, and life went on.

Conclusion

Just another grieving incident in Second Life. The primary facts to note here are this was a brand new av, and the av was far more highly skilled than a typical SL n00b. The vast majority of griever avs are brand new because most people aren't willing to risk their primary av accounts.

Griever, or Performance Art?

Issue

A topless female avatar was dancing on stage during a performance. The stage manager requested Ranger assistance in removing her from the stage.

F.L.A.M.E.

Find Out

A stage manager complained a topless female avatar was dancing on stage during a performance and being disruptive. The manager requested she be removed from the stage. Rangers observed the avatar dancing topless and bumping into the performer, knocking him around.

Listen

Rangers contacted the avatar and asked her to leave the stage. The avatar did not respond. After several minutes, the avatar left the area. However, she came back again several hours later and again was disruptive, dancing on stage, and bumping the performer, stage manager, and Rangers.

Analyze

The avatar's actions were disruptive. Her profile showed she was not new to Second Life as she was about a year old and had several groups. This indicated she was not a typical griever.

Mediate

The avatar's profile indicated it was unlikely she was a griever. A Ranger sent her a TP to remove her from the stage, rather than ejecting her. She accepted the TP, and then rezzed a car, which she then drove through the crowd, knocking people around. She then jumped out and ran across the playa, where another Ranger finally made contact with her.

The Ranger explained the avatar's actions were disruptive. The avatar indicated she was unaware of that, and she was also unaware of how she became topless or how to put her top

back on. (Being topless was not an issue.) Her Second Life skills were extremely lacking for someone with a year's experience. The Ranger assisted the avatar with dressing herself and spent some time explaining how to use Second Life, the concepts behind Burning Man and Burning Life, and Second Life etiquette. The avatar appeared to understand and went off to explore other areas in Second Life.

After an hour or so, she returned to the Burning Life stage and repeated her disruptive actions. At that time, staff AR'd her, and her account was canceled by Linden Lab.

Explain

Shortly thereafter, she reappeared with a new avatar, and she wanted to know why her account had been canceled. She met with a Senior Ranger and M2Danger Ranger, who talked to her at length about her behavior. She promised she would behave, and Rangers agreed to let her remain on the estate.

However, during a conversation with a Ranger, she admitted to being under age. An AR was filed, and her new account was canceled, as well.

Conclusion

In talking with her, she revealed she had created her first account a year ago, but she had not used it since that first day, which explained why she was unable to redress herself. Also, she was not aware of how to use IMs, which is why she never responded to any Rangers requests until the one Ranger used local chat, instead of IMs. Moreover, she was more familiar with a different virtual reality game, one in which the other avatars she interacted with were often system bots. She did not realize avatars in Second Life actually represent people, and that people were talking to her, not the system. She did not know there was actually a live person behind the performer on stage.

This is a case where we had an avatar with an apparently established account (a year old, groups listed in her profile), but who was essentially a n00b. She was not a griefer or a performance artist; she was simply unfamiliar with how to use Second Life and Second Life etiquette. After Rangers spent several hours with her, she appeared to understand and modified her behavior accordingly. Unfortunately, she was underage. Rangers have a responsibility to report known underage avatars on the Burning Life sims.

Commodification: Advertising, etc.

Issues

A Ranger walking by a parcel notices several things that cause some concern. The first issue is the artists have a rotating sign using a well-known trademarked logo. Clicking the sign opens a browser window to the artists' photo group web site with information about an upcoming art

show. Does this constitute advertising?

The second issue is the artists display is a search tool that allows people to enter search words and have other people's images display and numerous screens. A Ranger is concerned people could enter search terms that could cause offensive images in violation of the Linden Lab ToS policy to be displayed, such as those of hate, violence, and/or pornography, which would then be broadly visible to everyone passing by.

F.L.A.M.E.

Find out

The Ranger reviews the group's web page and sees images of the artists' work and information about an upcoming art show in Second Life. The Ranger uses the image search kiosk to bring up images to see how it works. The images are displayed on numerous screens (60? 80?) around the perimeter of a large square area and are broadly visible to anyone on the parcel.

Listen

The Ranger has strong religious convictions about hate and violence and is very concerned people would use the image search kiosk to display images that would be offensive to groups of people, especially those historically oppressed. Recognizing a potential trigger issue, the Ranger sought input from a group of other Rangers before proceeding any further.

Analyze

1. It's possible (probable) the logo usage is a trademark infringement, but Rangers are not the judges of that. However, to avoid any trademark issues, it would probably be better if the artists changed their sign to something like "Click here to view more of our work" or something similar that would let people know its purpose.
2. Clicking the sign and having it open a web page to show the artists' work is not necessarily advertisement; it could also be looked at as another method the artists are using to show their work, so this is possibly within Burning Life guidelines and probably OK.
3. Although it may be possible the image search kiosk could be used to display offensive images, the Rangers can't make decisions based on what might happen. The fact that someone "might" use the search kiosk to display offensive images should not be a deterrent to having the display.
4. Would these types of images be banned by the photo site's ToS? If they are, then the possibility of this happening could be remote. Because of the Ranger's strong religious convictions, s/he was not able to actually test the search kiosk to see if these types of images would come up in a search.
5. The images require the use of the Second Life client's media control; they are not displayed automatically. Therefore, the images would not be broadly visible to people on the roadway (you have to be on the parcel itself); they would only be broadly visible to people on the parcel itself, and only after activating the media controller.

Mediate

The Ranger contacted the artists and 1) suggested they change their sign to something more personal and remove the trademark logo, and 2) asked if there was some way to set the image search kiosk to have a "safe" set of default images in case someone uses it to display images against ToS.

Explain

The artists contacted the Rangers and said they would be working with a member of the Art Department to bring their display into Burning Life compliance; therefore, the case was closed.

Conclusion

A member of Governance happened to pass the sign in question on the way to investigating another art display and returned the sign with their standard explanation email. It is not known if any other changes were made to this display.

Creative Compliance

Issue

A parcel was using a banner image from a Burning Life web in its signage. Part of the banner had a small Linden Lab eye-in-hand logo.

F.L.A.M.E.

Find out

Checked with a Linden Lab employee about the usage of the logo in the signage and was told it was inappropriate.

Listen

The builders on this parcel had had a number of Ranger contacts and had already done numerous things to bring their display into compliance. These contacts had made this group of participants extremely sensitive to Rangers' presence. The usage of the logo was probably in error because the Burning Life staff had given out a similar texture free for builders to use, except the texture did not have the Linden Lab logo on it. It appears the builders may have used the image from the web site, not realizing they were actually different. And, the logo itself was very small, so....

Analyze

Rangers discussed the various options available and decided probably the easiest thing to do would be simply to cover the logo with a small block a similar color as the rest of the banner and not say anything.

Mediate

Rangers used the "KISS" method (Keep It Simple S[insert your own]).

Explain

Nobody said anything.

Conclusion

Nobody noticed.

Complaint - Trademark Violation, Offensive Build

From BURN2 2010. No LSD report was filed on this. *Disclaimer: the builder, in this case, was Ronon Carver, Ranger Department Lead.*

Issues

A BURN2 participant filed a complaint about a satirical build called the "Ho House." The build, in Bordello sim, consisted of hoes, the gardening implements, placed in various poses. The build contained signs that said "Free Fine Ho's", instructions on how hoes should be treated, and offering people a place to go to bed with hoes. The build also contained a parody of a Home Depot sign that said "Ho Depot" and several protest signs asking people to boycott the Ho House for mistreatment of hoes.

The participant thought the build was degrading to women and that the Ho Depot sign was a trademark violation.

F.L.A.M.E.

Find out

The Ranger who took this complaint reviewed the build. There were signs advising people how to treat hoes, as well as signs offering the use of hoes, and the Ho Depot sign parody. Hoes were placed in positions so that someone using the surrounding poseballs would be gazing at a hoe's blade, or lying with an arm draped over a hoe, dancing with a hoe, or sitting in a hot tub with a hoe. But the hoes were just hoes--ordinary gardening tools. There was nothing about them to suggest they were feminine. And there was nothing at all sexual about any of the poseballs.

Listen

The investigating Ranger listened to the complainant. Why did the participant find the build offensive? What was the intent of the builder? What about the build could be considered offensive?

The complainant was offended by the use of the word “ho,” which was an offensive term for women. But the intent of the build was clearly humorous; a parody of the name of the sim and the word “ho.” Although the word “ho” was used--no “e”--the build was about hoes with an “e.” And, there was nothing at all sexually suggestive about the hoe poses. Lastly, the builder was a woman, herself.

Analyze

The build contained no reference to women at all. Nor did it contain any images of women. Although the word “ho” can be a derogatory term, it clearly meant the gardening implement in this instance. Although the poseballs, if paired with another human, might appear suggestive, when paired with gardening implements, they were not. And, risque humor is very much a part of Burning Man culture.

As for the Ho Depot sign, “certain parodies of trademarks may be permissible if they are not too directly tied to commercial use. The basic idea here is that artistic and editorial parodies of trademarks serve a valuable critical function, and that this critical function is entitled to some degree of First Amendment protection.”

(<http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/metaschool/fisher/domain/tm.htm>). Therefore, the sign was allowable.

Mediate

There was nothing to mediate. There are no violations here.

Explain

The Ranger explained to the participant that the build was a humorous play on the name of the sim, and that the Ho Depot sign was an allowable parody. She also advised the participant that the builder was a woman, as well, and assured her that the builder in no way meant offense, but rather satire. (The Ranger knew the builder and had talked to her about the build.)

Conclusion

The build was allowed. If the participant found it offensive, she could look the other way.