

Organizing A Lumberjack Contest



The information here is presented as a set of guidelines, to assist prospective contest organizers in making an informed decision as to whether a Lumberjack Contest is a viable option for their event.

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If after reviewing the material in this guide you feel your organization would like to organize and promote a lumberjack contest, we strongly urge you to contact one of the associations or contest organizers in your area.

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Chapter One - Venues

Welcome

First of all, let me take this opportunity to welcome you to the exciting world of lumberjack sports. With the advent of Stihl's Timbersports¹ Series, and the ESPN Great Outdoor Games, lumberjack sports is receiving more national media exposure than it has at any other time in its history, and as you would expect its popularity is growing accordingly.

The Venue

Lumberjack contests are quite flexible as far the venues in which they can be performed. Over the years, I have seen them entertain and delight spectators at many various locations. The following is just a partial list of those locations, however it should be enough to give you some insight regarding a Lumberjack Contest's flexibility and universal crowd appeal.

- **State Fairs**
- **County Fairs**
- **Firemen's Field Days**
- **Rodeo Arenas**
- **Maple Festivals**
- **Craft Shows**
- **Museums**
- **Historical Villages**
- **Bicentennial Celebrations**
- **Sea World**
- **Disney Land**
- **As stand alone events**

Scheduling

Lumberjack Competitions are generally scheduled for weekends or the days immediately preceding or following the weekend. One of the main factors you should consider when planning the date for your competition, is whether you will be running against an already established contest, as you may have difficulty drawing contestants in such a situation. Check in advance with your local Association to avoid that possibility.

Area Requirements

In this section we will deal with the minimum area a contest would require, as offhand, I can't remember ever competing in an area which was too large.

If you were thinking about having a small to medium sized contest with say 20 to 30 contestants and eight events; an area 50' by 75' would probably be sufficient, depending on what the actual events were.

For more information on the amount of area required, and its relationship to the events, we suggest you contact your local Lumberjack Association directly.

Lighting

If you're thinking about holding the competition at night, you should make sure the competition area has adequate lighting. The lighting should be directed inward from at least two or three different angles so as not to cause shadows.

Securing The Contest Area

If you're planning to hold the competition at a venue similar to the track in front of a fair's grandstand, securing the Competition area should be no problem. As the competition area would already be fenced off on the front and back sides, all you would probably have to do is rope off the two ends. However, if you are considering holding the competition in an open field or some similar location you should definitely consider securing the perimeter with a fence or rope.

Competitors Accessibility

Due to the nature of lumberjack competitions, competitors have to bring a substantial number of tools into the contest arena. Consideration should be given in regards to giving them vehicle access to the arena for the purpose of unloading, and loading their equipment.

1. The term / word "Timbersports" is the trademarked property Stihl Inc.

Chapter Two - Event Selection and Wood

A Brief History

Most of the events being performed in today's competitions evolved from the actual tasks required of lumberjacks just prior to the appearance of the chain saw. Due to factors such as accessibility, terrain, tree size, and local demand, the skills and tasks required of the timber jack would vary slightly from region to region. Accordingly, the events being performed in today's competitions are a reflection of that variation.

If you're a first time contest organizer, you should probably consider starting out small and adding more events in succeeding years as you gain experience. By following this formula you could work your way up to hosting one of the major shows in your region.

Event Selection

Following are some of the more popular events performed in today's lumberjack contest. The ones on the left are performed in virtually all the geographic regions, while the ones on the right are performed in most of the regions, but not all. By consulting with your regional Lumberjack Association regarding each event's space and time requirements, you should be able to plan a contest that's uniquely tailored to your specific venue and time requirements.

- **Underhand Chop**
- **Two-Person Crosscut Saw**
- **Standing Block Chop**
- **Hot Saw / Modified Chain Saw**
- **Axe Throwing**
- **Jack & Jill Crosscut**
- **Springboard Chop**
- **Single Bucking / One-Person Crosscut**
- **Stock Chain Saw**
- **Bow Sawing**
- **Women's Crosscut Saw & Bow Saw**
- **Women's Underhand Chop**
- **Obstacle Pole & Choker Race**
- **Tree Falling**
- **Log Rolling (land & water - birling)**
- **Pole Climbing**

In many regions, the women's events are gaining in both spectator and competitor popularity. The crowds are always amazed by the level of skill, strength, and determination displayed by the Lumberjills. If your time constraints permit, you should definitely consider having separate events and awards for the women competitors.

Chopping and Sawing Wood

Just as the events performed vary from one region to the next, so too does the wood used in each region. The following table lists, by geographic region, some of the more common species used for competitions. Consult with your regional association concerning quantity requirements and availability.

Region	Sawing Wood	Chopping Wood
North Atlantic States	White Pine, Poplar/Aspen	White Pine, Poplar/Aspen
South Eastern States	Yellow-Poplar, W. Pine	Yellow-Poplar, W. Pine
Southern States	Sweet Gum, Yellow-Poplar	Sweet Gum, Yellow-Poplar
Midwestern States	Poplar/Aspen, White Pine	Poplar/Aspen, White Pine
Pacific & N. West States	Cottonwood, Aspen, Larch	Cottonwood, Aspen, Larch

Again, at the risk of sounding repetitive, we strongly urge you to check with your local association before making any efforts to obtain the competition wood. It would be a shame for all concerned if after buying or getting the wood donated it turned out to be unsuitable for competition purposes.

Chapter Three - Running the Contest

Putting It Together

Well we decided on the events we're having; we got the chopping and sawing wood for the competition; you say, "what's next?". Well, on the day of the competition we're going to need a few people to put it all together. The following are some of those people, and an outline of what their jobs would be. For the most part, with the possible exception of the Emcee and Head Judge, most contests rely heavily on a circle of volunteers to do these jobs.

Emcee (announcer)

In most instances you will want someone familiar with the sport to do your announcing. A good announcer will keep the contest rolling at a fast, exciting pace, and provide color commentary about the competitors and the events. This becomes extremely important for those occasional lulls when you're changing wood, or setting up for the next event.

Head Judge

The Head Judge is appointed by the contest organizers. Customarily they would be someone who has a working knowledge of the rules and has had experience competing in Lumberjack Sports. The Head Judge's job is to enforce the rules, and he has the final say in all matters pertaining to the enforcement and interpretation of those rules. The following are a few of the Head Judge's duties.

- Ensure that the timers are familiar with, and know when to start and stop their stopwatches.
- Ensure that the chopping blocks and sawing positions are fairly drawn and properly assigned.
- Ensure that the competition arena is run in a safe and efficient manner.
- Disqualify or appropriately penalize any competitor guilty of rule a violation.
- Disqualify or appropriately penalize any competitor displaying poor sportsmanship.

Timers

Timing is generally done by volunteers. In addition to timing the events, the timers act as an extension of the Head Judge's eyes, carefully observing that each of the competitors competing at their station abides by the rules. There should be at least two timers at each station.

You probably should also have at least two alternate timers (maybe more depending on the size of your contest) to act as substitutes, so the regular timers can get an occasional break for refreshments and to deal with the necessities of life.

Score Keeper

You will also need a couple of people to average and record the times, again preferably volunteers. Once the times from each heat are averaged and recorded, a copy should be given to the Emcee so he or she can announce them over the sound system. Announcing the results of each heat should be done in a timely fashion as both the spectators, and the competitors like to keep abreast of what's happening.

Wood Handlers

In addition to the timers you will need people to move the wood in and out of the saw stands, move setups and to help in general. Once again, we want to utilize our volunteers for these chores.

Association Help

If you're in the process of planning a regional contest, sanctioned by one of the associations, there is a pretty good chance they would be willing to pitch in with some of the above duties, or put you in touch with people that can.

If you need their assistance with any of the above, and chances are pretty good that you do, the first thing you should do is find out what's available, and work it out with them well in advance of the competition.

Chapter Four - Cost and Responsibilities

Cost

Whether you represent a fair or a festival looking for exciting entertainment, or an organization looking to raise money or enhance a celebration, dollar for dollar very few forms of entertainment have the universal crowd appeal and excitement that a lumberjack contest can bring to your event.

Our original intent here was to give you the actual dollar amounts to have a lumberjack contest at your event, however after thoroughly researching that option it became obvious that it was an unrealistic undertaking due to each area's unique demographics, and factors such as competitor availability, travel distances, and wood cost.

Rather than give you poor or misleading information we suggest that you contact your regional association directly to get the latest information on cost and availability.

Shared Responsibilities

To insure that there are no misunderstandings, and that your contest is a success for all concerned, the following are some of the other things related to a lumberjack contest that you should discuss prior to the day of the competition with your regional representative.

- **Area (sq. footage requirements)**
- **Wood Procurement & Sizing**
- **Chopping & Sawing Stands**
- **Sound System**
- **Head Judge**
- **Timers**
- **Score Keeper**
- **Wood Handlers**
- **What Time Will the Contest Start**
- **How Long Will the Contest Run**
- **What Will the Actual Events Be**
- **Arena Security (fence off competition area)**
- **Electricity**
- **Competitor Accessibility & Parking**
- **Ambulance & EMTs**
- **Spectator Liability Insurance**

Some of the above responsibilities are normally performed by the regional association and its members, and some of them will fall upon you as the show's organizer. Discuss well in advance and make sure everyone concerned knows exactly what's expected of them, and what their responsibilities are. The association's policies concerning the above vary slightly from region to region, so make sure you ask.

Going It Alone

If you live in an area where you're fortunate enough to have a Lumberjack Association, you can skip over this section, however if you're one of the unfortunate few that doesn't have a local association, read on.

If you have previous experience organizing and promoting public events in general, most likely you should have no problem organizing and promoting a lumberjack contest. However, if you have no previous knowledge or experience in the actual running of a "lumberjack contest" itself, this is where you may have problems.

The first and foremost thing you should consider, is going to an existing contest. Once at the contest, take videos, ask questions, take more videos, and ask more questions, be observant and pay attention to the little things. Talk to the competitors, get a general idea how much prize money would be required to entice them to a competition in your area.

Try and find out if any of the competitors are from your area, and if so would they be willing to assist you or act as a consultant. Having one or two experienced competitors on the planing committee would certainly be a major asset, and go a long way in guaranteeing the success of your event for all concerned.

Conclusion

As you can see, just as with any other public event, organizing a lumberjack competition requires a certain amount of planning. The good news in all of this is that you generally don't have to go it alone. By utilizing volunteers in conjunction with your area's Lumberjack Association, you will without a doubt, be able to plan and orchestrate a first class competition.

Whether you represent a Fair, Civic Group, or a Business Organization; if you're looking for exciting, and wholesome family entertainment, make your dream a reality... contact your local representative, and become a part of the action.

Lumberjack Associations - United States

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