

Mae-Nebuta (Lead Nebuta)

Mae-Nebuta, or lead Nebuta, are smaller floats that parade in front of each of the 22 large Nebuta floats. These “mini-Nebuta” head each committee’s procession and are usually modeled on a character, product, or other theme associated with the committee. They come in a wide variety of shapes: beer cans, anime characters, airplanes, and pet food have all made appearances along the parade route. The lead Nebuta are made with the same material as the regular floats—*washi* paper painted bright colors with lightbulbs inside. After working on a Mae-Nebuta, their creators sometimes move on to become apprentices of the *nebutashi* (Nebuta artisans) or otherwise deepen their involvement with Nebuta-making. The lead Nebuta sit on rickshaws and are pulled by only a handful of people, instead of a 20-person *hikite* (float pulling) team.