



Chainsaw & Crosscut Saw Training & Certification Policy

The North Country Trail Association (NCTA) endorses the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service and the National Park Service (NPS) approach to the administration of their respective employee worker-safety programs and joins with those agencies in the administration of safety programs to protect volunteers and employees working on the North Country National Scenic Trail. The NCTA appreciates and supports programs that protect trail workers under the Volunteers in the Forests Act, the Volunteers in the Parks Act, and related agency sponsorship of training and safety programs.

In its authorization to equip and train NCTA workers, including volunteers, employees, and workers from the maintaining clubs, as well as in its work with cooperating state agencies, NCTA:

- Recognizes that, individual North Country National Scenic Trail (NCNST) workers have primary responsibility for their own personal safety and for compliance with the requirements for chainsaw and crosscut saw operators. Furthermore, each volunteer engaged in club- or crew-sponsored maintenance and construction activities assumes personal responsibility for following crew-leader or club directions, assessing his or her own physical condition and preparedness for engaging in trail-work activities, and coming properly equipped and clothed in a manner appropriate for the location, duration, weather conditions, and proposed work.
- Acknowledges that, through its agreements with the National Park Service and the USDA Forest Service, NCNST-maintaining clubs have—through individual memoranda of understanding sub-delegating to them leadership and control over their respective sections of the North Country National Scenic Trail—the authority and responsibility to control all club volunteer-maintenance activities by their members and affiliates.
- Follows current individual safety requirements that apply to federal employees in those agencies but recognizes that volunteers may require additional time, resources, and assistance to meet agency requirements and goals. Those requirements can be found in the USDA Forest Service Health and Safety Code Handbook’s “Minimum Requirements for Chainsaw Operation” (Section 22.48, pages 20-47 through 20-62) and “OSHA General Requirements for Logging Operations.”
- Follows the Missoula Technology and Development Center’s curriculum, or its agency-approved successors, for chainsaw and crosscut saw certification. In evaluating individual sawyer skills when certifying or recertifying sawyers, NCTA authorized chainsaw instructors may consider equivalent course materials from other programs.

- Encourages trail-maintaining crews and clubs to maintain current voluntary services agreements with their federal agency partners. These agreements generally will list all volunteer workers and will outline any applicable medical coverage and tort protection for incidents on the NCNST arising from these groups' volunteer activities there. These agreements are authorized under agency sponsored Volunteers in Parks (VIP) or Volunteers in Forest (VIF) programs at the local level.
- NCTA recognizes that, under the VIP and VIF programs, volunteers are considered "federal employees" for the purposes of medical and tort-claims protections. However, the NCTA maintains that its organization, its Chapters and Affiliates, and its individual volunteer workers and employees are independent citizens working under private NCTA or club auspices within the law, regulations, and policies set by the federal agencies.

To the extent financially feasible, NCTA will:

- Seek public funding to fully implement training and equipment programs necessary for safety management.
- Seek instructor-certifiers who can be qualified under USDA Forest Service and NPS auspices as instructors who can authorize local instructors and operators. NCTA's state partners, and trail-maintaining clubs should encourage willing, skilled, regularly practicing sawyers with talents for teaching to become qualified as instructors by a Forest Service qualified instructor-certifier.
- Provide personal protective equipment (PPE) meeting current best management practices to its instructor-certifiers, its local instructors, its certified operators, and its trail-crew leaders.
- Reimburse approved volunteer expenses for first-aid/CPR training and PPE purchases.
- Encourage both agencies to recognize current certifications still in effect through their full three-year terms.
- Prepare current best management practices (BMPs), which will be summarized in a volunteer-friendly format.
- Work with the agencies to publish and distribute attractive and effective training and safety-administration handbooks, videos, and other media and to minimize reporting requirements and other paperwork.