

Final DRAFT Sawyer Training FAQ

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Questions about equipment and First Aid/CPR training:

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- Who is eligible for free PPE?**
- How do A.T. sawyers obtain their PPE?**
- Why are First Aid and CPR required for certified sawyers?**
- What type of First Aid and CPR courses are required?**
- Where and how can A.T. sawyers obtain their first-aid and/or CPR certification?**

General Certification Questions:

Q - Why is sawyer certification required for A.T. volunteers?

A – First and foremost, sawyer safety training and certification is *important* because using chain saws and crosscut saws to cut blowdowns and for other trail maintenance chores is some of the most hazardous work that A.T. volunteers perform. Certification is *required* because A.T. volunteers are considered to be federal employees for the purposes of tort claims and compensation for work injuries because A.T. volunteers work under Volunteers-in-Forest (VIF) or Volunteers-in Parks(VIP) agreements in effect between A.T. Trail Clubs and their agency partners (either the National Park Service or the USDA Forest Service).

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) recognizes saw operations as potentially very hazardous, and requires employers (including “employers of volunteers”) to provide training.

Because policies of the federal government (OSHA regulations adopted by the U.S. Forest Service) require certification for employees who operate crosscut saws or chain-saws on National Forest lands. A.T. volunteers are technically considered government employees while working on the A.T. This is because they work under the Volunteers-in-Forests (VIF) and/or Volunteers-in-Parks (VIP) agreements signed between maintaining clubs and their agency partners.

Q – What policies guide ATC’s sawyer training program?

A – A Memorandum of Understanding that was signed between the U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, and ATC in 2003 is the guiding document. It replaced ATC’s own curriculum and training program with the curriculum developed by the Forest Service’s Missoula Technology and Development Center (MTDC). In this MOU, the parties (USFS, NPS, and ATC) recognize:

- § That the safety of A.T. workers is the principal concern,
- § That a single, consistent Trail-wide safety training and certification program is both necessary and desirable,
- § That OSHA regulations are the basic authority,
- § That USFS Health and Safety Code requirements are the current “best practices”,
- § That participation in a training course by an A.T. worker is NOT a guarantee of certification, and that instructors have complete authority to limit the scope of certification.
- § The MTDC curriculum as the basis for instruction,
- § That each party will provide training and certification opportunities to meet A.T. worker needs to the fullest extent possible,
- § That swyer certifications will be recognized by all parties,
- § That PPE and other supplies will be provided to sawyers to the extent possible.
- §

In addition, ATC’s Board of Managers passed the **Chain-saw and Crosscut Saw Training and Certification** policy on November 23, 2003. It states that...

- § Individual AT workers have the primary responsibility for their own personal safety and for compliance with requirements for sawyers.
- § A.T. Clubs have the authority and responsibility to control the trail maintenance activities of their members.
- § ATC recognizes the OSHA and USFS Safety Code requirements for sawyers.
- § ATC recognizes the MTDC training and certification curriculum as the basis for A.T. sawyer training and certification efforts.
- § ATC, working with the NPS and USFS, will seek to provide training and certification opportunities for A.T. volunteers, including the development of a limited number of ATC contract instructors.
- § ATC, to the extent financially feasible, will seek to provide required Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for certified sawyers.
- § ATC, to the extent financially feasible, will seek to reimburse volunteer expenses for first aid and CPR certification costs.

Q – What constitutes an A.T. sawyer?

A – ATC has agreed on the following definition for an A.T. sawyer:

An A.T. sawyer is a member or affiliate of an A.T. maintaining club who works on the A.T. at least two times per year. An A.T. sawyer may be an officially designated maintainer of an A.T. section or A.T. side trail section, or may participate in club work trips.

Questions about certification workshops:

Q – What is the “textbook” for an A.T. sawyer training course?

A – The U.S. Forest Service’s Missoula Technology & Development Center’s (MTDC) Chain Saw and Crosscut Saw Training Course guidebook serves as the basis for the program’s curriculum. This curriculum is provided to all course participants and is also available for download from ATC’s sawyer training webpage.

Q – How can I find a listing of available courses?

A – ATC maintains a list of ATC or club-sponsored chainsaw or crosscut saw courses available along the trail. To find a course near you, contact your local ATC office. You may also view an online list by region by visiting the following website <http://www.appalachiantrail.org/protect/steward/sawyer1.html>. Each course lists a contact person, who should be contacted to ensure that space is available.

Q – How do I register for a course?

A – Pre-registration is required for all ATC sawyer training courses. To register, a participant must complete and return the Volunteer Sawyer Course Application form.

This form is available from your local ATC regional office or to download from our website at <http://www.appalachiantrail.org/protect/steward/sawyer1.html>.

Q – What if there are no courses scheduled in my area?

A – If you are a member of an A.T. maintaining club and wish to get certified, contact your Trails Supervisor or Club President and let them know of your interest in becoming certified. If you are not a club member, contact your regional ATC office to see when future courses may be offered.

Q – How long are the courses?

A – Generally, the courses range from 12 hours to 24 hours in length depending upon the instructor. A course will contain a mix of classroom and field based instruction and also hands on opportunities to use a saw. They may be held on a weekend, during the week, and a combination of day and night sessions. This depends upon the needs of the audience and the instructors' availability.

Q – What is typically covered during the courses?

A – A typical sawyer certification course is a combination of classroom and field work, and covers some combination of the following topics:

- A discussion of the Job Hazard Analysis (JHA) for chainsaw or crosscut saw operations. The JHA identifies the hazards associated with the task to be accomplished, identifies abatement actions that can eliminate or reduce hazards, and lists the first-aid supplies and emergency evacuation procedures.
- A discussion on Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) required for saw operation.
- Situational Awareness
- A hands-on discussion covering Chain-saw or Crosscut saw use and maintenance.
- A discussion on common Chain-saw or Crosscut saw tasks and techniques, including bucking, limbing, and/or felling.
- Demonstrations of proper techniques by instructors
- Practice of techniques by participants, and opportunities for participants to demonstrate proficiency in tasks to the instructors.

Q – Who typically teaches the courses?

A – ATC courses are taught by highly skilled and experienced sawyers who are also certified instructors. The instructors are either a government employee (mostly U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, or a partner State agency) or a private contractor hired by ATC.

Q – Who can participate in ATC sawyer training courses?

A – The answer to this question depends upon who is teaching the course. For courses taught by agency affiliated instructors, non A.T. sawyers are allowed to register and are placed on a waiting list. They are allowed to participate if roster space exists. For courses taught by an ATC contract instructor, a minimum of 60% of the course participants must be A.T. sawyers.

Q – **Is there a fee to participate in a course?**

A – Yes and No. Sawyer training courses are offered at no charge to A.T. sawyers (see definition above) and members of A.T. maintaining clubs. Others will be allowed to participate only if space exists. For ATC contractor led courses, non A.T. sawyers will be required to pay a \$130 course fee, which covers the materials and instruction.

Q – **Why is everyone responsible for a \$65 cancellation fee associated with the courses?**

A – This “no show” fee is only assessed (e.g. your check cashed or credit card billed) if a student doesn’t show up for the course and fails to notify their regional ATC office at least a week prior to the course. Exceptions to this rule are made on a case-by-case basis. Any money generated by this fee will be used to help cover ATC’s sawyer training costs (e.g. supplies and equipment, workshop administration, and contract instructor costs).

Questions about an individual’s certification:

Q - **What is the difference between an A, B, and C sawyer?**

A – The different levels refer to the qualification and limitations issued you by your course instructor. An “A” stands for Apprentice Sawyer while a “B” stands for Intermediate Sawyer. Note: A “C” sawyer is an advanced sawyer and is only issued to instructors. See below for more complete description of how instructors determine which level participants are given.

- q “A – Apprentice Sawyer” level. This classification is appropriate for a training participant who has little or no previous experience. It requires supervision by a “B” or “C” sawyer for all operations, and does not allow independent work by the holder. It is reasonable to expect sawyers to gain experience and then upgrade from A to B levels in future training and certification sessions.
- q “B – Intermediate Sawyer” level. This classification, either with or without limitations, is appropriate for a training participant who demonstrates proper safety procedures and some proficiency with the saw. It allows independent operation by the holder and the instructor may limit the certification in numerous ways.

Q – How long is a sawyer certification valid for?

A – A certification is valid for three years from the date of issue. A sawyer must re-certify before the expiration date in order to continue sawing on the A.T.

Q – How can I be re-certified?

A – Volunteers in need of re-certification must sign up for, attend, and successfully complete a certification course. They may do so near the end of their 3 year certification or at any time during the 3 years.

Q – Are there shorter re-certification courses available?

A – Unfortunately, the answer is No. All certified sawyers in need of certification must complete an additional full course. This is because each course will cover additional material, outline new practices, and offer opportunities for hands on practice. ATC may be offering “advanced” courses geared towards previously certified sawyers at some point in the near future.

Q – How was my certification level determined?

A – The course instructor determined your certification level based upon observing your proficiency with the saw during the field portion of the course.

Questions about equipment and First Aid/CPR training:

Q – What personal protective equipment (PPE for short) is required when operating a chainsaw or crosscut saw on the A.T.?

A – A.T. volunteers are required to wear the following when operating a chainsaw: 8” high heavy duty leather boots, gloves, long-sleeved shirt, chainsaw chaps, a 6-point hardhat, ear protection, and eye protection. Crosscut sawyers are required to wear the 6-point hardhat, eye protection, gloves, and 8” high heavy duty boots.

Q – Who is eligible for free PPE?

A – All certified A.T. sawyers are eligible for a full starter set of free “loaner” PPE from ATC. Sawyers who quit volunteering on the A.T. are expected to relinquish their equipment to their club.

Q – How do A.T. sawyers obtain their PPE?

A – A.T. sawyers may order their PPE following their workshop using the PPE order form sent by ATC.

A – Yes. However, each maintaining club has decided whether to keep the gear as club property or to issue it as individual property. Club presidents should keep in mind that free PPE funding is finite.

Q – **Why are First Aid and CPR required for certified sawyers?**

A – Current First Aid and CPR certification is required by OSHA. As addressed in the first FAQ question, OSHA requirements apply to A.T. volunteers.

It has been noted by some individuals that the sawyer is the most likely member of a work party to be injured and so it is advisable that someone *other than* the sawyer be trained in first aid and CPR. This is certainly desirable, but is not a formal requirement. ATC recommends that all A.T. workers be trained in first aid and CPR. Additionally, sawyers should never work alone. At a minimum, one additional person is required to act as lookout and swamper. The First Aid and CPR are requirements placed upon government employees by OSHA. Again, A.T. sawyers are considered employees under the VIP/VIF agreements.

Q – **What type of First Aid and CPR courses are required?**

A - The certification must be from a nationally recognized organization. Examples include American Red Cross, American Heart Association, or SOLO. The length of certification varies and is determined by the nationally recognized organization.

Q - **Where and how can A.T. sawyers obtain their first-aid and/or CPR certification?**

A - Sawyers (and other interested ATC club members) may participate in a course offered by a local provider or an ATC or club-sponsored course. There may already be a course scheduled for your local area with another outdoor program (*e.g.*, college, camp, club, *etc.*). Another option is scheduling a course whenever and wherever is most convenient for your club's sawyers or general membership. Some clubs have had members who are professional medical providers volunteer their services to teach the courses. Others have hosted the medical training at night after the day's sawyer training concludes, ensuring that volunteers are required to give up only one weekend and obtain both their sawyer and first-aid/CPR certification. Which course you select depends upon your level of interest in backcountry medicine, the amount of time you have available, and your willingness to learn. Your local ATC staff is willing to work with clubs to set up courses at convenient locations and times and may have financial assistance available to help offset course fees.

Here are the most common options available:

Basic First Aid/Adult CPR course from your local American Red Cross chapter. For info on local courses, visit <http://www.redcross.org/> and search for your local chapter. This course fulfills the minimum requirement for A.T. sawyers. Cost is approximately \$25-65.

[Note: All of the following options exceed the minimum certification requirements for A.T. Sawyers, except where noted. Your regional ATC office can provide more information or arrange a course. Course descriptions adapted from Landmark Learning's Web site.]

Customized Basic First Aid/Adult CPR with a “wilderness emphasis,” provided by a local organization—an eight-hour course that covers the basics and discusses the most common backcountry medicine situations. Cost: approximately \$80-120.

Wilderness First Aid—a 16-hour course widely considered to be the minimum certification level for outdoor professionals. It covers the basics and in-depth scenarios addressing the most common traumatic, medical, and environmental issues that may occur in the backcountry. The course does *not* typically include CPR. Cost: approximately \$120 and up.

Wilderness First Responder—an 80+ hour course that is rapidly becoming the industry standard for outdoor leaders. It gives in-depth training in trauma, medical, and extreme environmental issues, and the course length allows for ample hands-on rescue scenarios. The course does *not* typically include CPR. Students must successfully complete practical and written assessments at the end of the course for certification. Cost: approximately \$700 and up.

For more information on any of these courses, contact your regional ATC office or visit any of the following national/regional course provider Web sites to see what may be scheduled in your area:

SOLO: <http://www.soloschools.com/>

SOLO Southeast: http://www.landmarklearning.org/html/solo_southeast.html

NOLS WMI: <http://www.nols.edu/wmi/>

WMA: <http://www.wildmed.com/>

Additional Questions

If you have questions about the sawyer training program that are not answered here, feel free to contact your local regional ATC office. Contact information is found online at: http://www.appalachiantrail.org/site/c.jkLXJ8MQKtH/b.856595/k.2E47/ATC_Offices.htm