

VIP and VIF Protection for A.T. Volunteers

Issue: Keeping protections current for Volunteer Maintainers

Background: While advance preparation, proper tool use and protective gear may help prevent injuries to trail workers, accidents can and do happen. When an injury occurs while working on the Trail, volunteers working under the auspices of one of the 30 Appalachian Trail maintaining clubs are covered for medical treatment under federal Volunteers in the Parks (VIP) and Volunteers in the Forest (VIF) agreements.

Current Situation: To receive this coverage, volunteers must be authorized in writing by either the National Park Service (for VIP) or the U.S. Forest Service (for VIF). Both agencies have standard forms for this that can cover individuals or groups, including the Trail clubs. These agreements must be signed by the club and the appropriate federal agency, and the volunteer must be working within the scope of the volunteer agreement, which includes following basic safety practices, such as participating in a daily pre-work safety briefing (tailgate safety session), using all required personal protective equipment, and obtaining required training and certifications for specific tasks (for example, chain-saw or crosscut-saw operation).

Volunteers are not covered if injured during the drive to and from their volunteer work, and they are not compensated for time lost on a paid job due to an injury suffered as a volunteer.

Updated packets of information on VIP and VIF coverage, including forms and instructions, are being distributed to ATC regional offices and Trail clubs, and are available online: www.appalachiantrail.org/volinjurypacket.

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