



## **ATC Conservation and Trail Management Policy A.T. Volunteer Check-In/Checkout Communication**

<b>Published:</b> June 2020	<b>Reviewed:</b>
<b>Category:</b> Partners and Volunteer Management.	<b>Updated:</b>

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC), a §501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, works closely with Appalachian Trail volunteer maintaining clubs ("Clubs") and other public and private partners to ensure the protection and stewardship of the natural, cultural, and experiential resources of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail (known as ANST, A.T., or "the Trail"). Approximately fifty federal, state, or other public agencies have authority or jurisdiction over lands and resources within the protected A.T. corridor. ATC has a central management role by virtue of its Cooperative Agreement with the USDI National Park Service and its close working partnership with the USDA Forest Service and other agencies.

ATC's Trail management and conservation policies are meant to provide guidance for (a) dissemination to the public; (b) use and implementation by the ATC and the Clubs; and (c) recommendations for land-managing and other agencies. It is the agencies who work within their defined procedures to propose, administer, and enforce public policy. ATC policies are recommendations developed to support appropriate, coordinated Trail-wide management.

### **Overview**

Working on the Appalachian Trail can pose hazards that are different and potentially more serious than those encountered when simply hiking. This is particularly true when working alone--even in areas that are not considered remote. All Organizations have a Volunteer Service Agreement (VSA) or similar agreement with their respective land managing agency, and includes a Check-in/Checkout plan as a necessary component. The Check-in/Checkout plan will provide an emergency response protocol should volunteers encounter a situation that prevents them from returning or contacting their designated Point of Contact (POC) at the expected time. This policy also addresses recommendations for group activities by organizations to indicate responsibilities of individuals and group leaders within the group.

## **ATC Conservation and Trail Management Policy**

### **A.T. Volunteer Check-In/Checkout Communication**

#### **Policy**

Each volunteer managing organization (hereafter known as ‘organization’) shall develop a “Check-in/Checkout” Plan which will ensure a timely emergency response if a volunteer does not return or call their POC by an agreed time. The plan shall include the basic information needed about the volunteer and their whereabouts, and guidelines of what the POC’s actions should be if emergency response is required. A volunteer’s POC may be a friend, relative, neighbor, or Organization member who is available and competent to notify emergency responders. Once Organizations have developed their Check-in/Checkout Plans they shall share them with all of their respective land management agencies. In the event that 911 is used, involved organizations and volunteers will work with their federal land management agencies to perform an after action review. Volunteers are responsible for their own safety and conduct when they are in the field and are expected to follow all Land Manager safety procedures.

#### Check-In:

- Each Organization shall develop and implement a Check-in/Checkout Communication Plan. The plan will include provisions to train and remind the organization volunteers of the Check-in/Checkout procedures.
- Volunteer will implement the Check-in/Checkout Communication plan with their POC prior to beginning each trip. Volunteer should ensure that their POC is familiar with the Check-In/Checkout procedures prior to leaving for the field.
- Best practice is to leave written communication with the POC that contains the following information:
  - Vehicle Information: license plate number, make, model, and color.
  - Trip activity (Gen. Trail Maint., chainsaw work, shelter work, corridor monitoring, etc.).
  - Phone Numbers for:
    - The volunteer (mobile and home), Trip Leader (if any),
    - Organization’s coordinator/overseer or other organization-designated contact,
    - 911 and/or appropriate emergency response number(s) for specific site locations
  - Access point to work location (place vehicle is parked), including nearest town.
  - Work location and planned access route
  - Time of scheduled return or notification.

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- If a volunteer is part of a supervised group, the group leader is responsible for knowing if all members of the group have returned from the field (i.e. trailhead and/or end of trip designated meeting place).
  - Group leader will have contact information, including emergency contact info, from all volunteers participating in the work project.
  - Even in a group setting, individual volunteers should develop their own POC and provide the Check-in/Checkout information above.
  - Groups may want to consider a buddy system where two members can confirm each other's presence to the leader during and upon completion of a work trip.

#### Checkout:

- Volunteer must contact their POC by the designated return time.
- If no contact is received by the designated return time:
  - POC will:
    - Attempt to contact the Volunteer by phone and then other means which may include: a satellite messenger device, Trip Leader (if any), or other known/listed companions on the workday.
    - Use emergency phone numbers provided by club, or 911, to notify emergency responders.
    - Notify the Organization Supervisor or designated Organization contact.
  - Organization Leader / Supervisor will:
    - Notify APPA Safety Officer at 304-650-2677 and appropriate Land Managing Agency contact.
    - Offer assistance to emergency responders, as resources permit.

For questions related to this policy please contact the Appalachian Trail Conservancy at [www.appalachiantrail.org](http://www.appalachiantrail.org), or P.O. Box 807, Harpers Ferry, WV, 25425-807.

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy's mission is to protect, manage, and advocate for the Appalachian National Scenic Trail.