



ATC Conservation and Trail Management Policy Emergency Planning and Coordination

Published: Apr 1987	Reviewed: Jan 2020
Category: Public Safety	Updated: September 2022

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 Trailwide management.

Overview

The intent of this policy is to establish a basic guideline of responsibility in the event of an emergency.

Policy Body

Contingency Planning for Emergencies: Law-enforcement, fire-control, and search-and-rescue jurisdictions must be contacted during preparation of local management plans by the clubs and periodically thereafter. ATC and the clubs must establish basic familiarity with the Trail among all jurisdictions crossed by NPS corridor lands, so that there is less confusion and ambivalence when emergencies occur. Specific tasks consist of informing local authorities about the Trail’s location by providing current maps and sharing phone-contact lists for emergencies. Frequently, meetings are needed to explain the A.T. to local jurisdictions so that contingency plans are prepared with local authorities and each partner’s responsibilities are clear. (ATC Board of Managers, April 1987)

Responsibilities and Disclaimers: Authorized law-enforcement agencies have the primary responsibility for responding to and prosecuting crimes that occur on the A.T. or directly affect its hikers. ATC and its member clubs will cooperate in facilitating responses, if requested, but assume no legal responsibility. ATC and its clubs do not assume any duty to warn any hiker of any specific criminal risk on the Trail. (ATC Board of Managers, April 1984)



ATC Conservation and Trail Management Policy Emergency Planning and Coordination

Incidents: What to do when...

A.T. Partners and maintainers may encounter any number of issues. This quick reference tool helps direct appropriate action.

Corridor Encroachment Identified

- When corridor monitoring does uncover encroachments, the Trail club volunteers, ATC, and partner agencies work cooperatively to address the problems. The strategies used to address a problem will depend on its nature and severity.
- Complete [Encroachment Report Form](#) and share with the regional Stewardship Manager
 - [Encroachment flow chart](#) will determine how the issue is managed and by whom.
- If encroachment is currently occurring, contact the appropriate land manager ASAP.

Volunteer Injury or Close Call

- If an injury occurs, a volunteer should follow these five steps:
 1. Immediate care and First Aid
 2. Emergency treatment by a medical provider using CA-16, if needed (if possible, inform agency authorities first.)
 3. Reporting of the injury to the appropriate agency partner extending volunteer protections. (Volunteers in Parks / Volunteers in Forests)
 4. Documentation using Form CA-1
 5. Follow-up
- Injuries and close-calls should also be reported to ATC. Complete the [ATC Accident Report Form](#) and send to volunteer@appalachiantrail.org and to your ATC regional office.

Emergency Incidents

- When medical attention or an immediate law-enforcement response is necessary, call 911.
- Once 911 is activated, as time allows, contact the National Park Service 24-Hour Dispatch/Communications Center Non-Emergency Line to inform them of the situation: 1.202.619.7015
- Complete the Incident Form: <https://appalachiantrail.org/at-incident-form/>
- If you're an A.T. Club in contact with area Search and Rescue groups, make them aware to use the non-emergency line to share information after their efforts are complete. This helps land managers, ATC, and states know the impact and value of local and regional emergency responders specific to the A.T.



ATC Conservation and Trail Management Policy Emergency Planning and Coordination

Non-Emergency Incidents (public health or safety related to the Trail, facilities, or natural resources)

- If you are not in immediate danger but observe ongoing or recent vandalism or resource damage on the A.T., or just feel like something should be reported, contact the National Park Service 24-Hour Dispatch/Communications Center Non-Emergency Line to inform them of the situation: 1.301.714.2235
- Complete the Incident Form: <https://appalachiantrail.org/at-incident-form/>

A.T. Volunteer Grievance related to Conduct

- Most instances of actions in conflict related to volunteer safety and aspects of professional behavior are corrected within the organization hosting the volunteer. However, when that is not possible, [filing a grievance](#) may be necessary to spark corrective action and initiate opportunities for healing and restoration of trust.
- Reference Standards of Care for A.T. Volunteers for appropriate behavior and organizational code of conduct for related processes.

Bear Incident Form

- Did you have one of the following encounters on the Appalachian Trail where a bear:
 - Entered a campsite or shelter area.
 - Attempted to (or did) steal food.
 - Was aggressive toward you, another hiker, or a pet.
 - Damaged property.
 - Was following you while you were hiking.
 - Was acting strangely.
- Fill out a Bear Incident Form: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CCYZGC2>

For questions related to this policy please contact the Appalachian Trail Conservancy at 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.