

# USFS Saw program

## Frequently Asked Questions

### USFS Saw Program and Policy

**1. What is the USFS Saw program?**

- The National Forest Saw Program was developed to facilitate the safe use of chain saws and crosscut saws. The intent of the program is to provide the direction needed to optimize the critical skills needed by sawyers as they conduct saw operations on National Forest System (NFS) lands and ensure nationally consistent application of the Forest Service National Saw Policy (FSM 2358).

**2. Who does the USFS saw policy apply to?**

- FSM 2358 applies to all users of chain saw and crosscut saws on NFS lands. However, the policy does not apply to other Federal, State, Tribal, local govt entities, those working under interagency fire management cooperative agreements or contractors.

**3. I understand FSM 2358 is being updated. When will the new policy become effective?**

- The updated policy is set to become effective in January 2023. This timeframe was selected as to not adversely affect ongoing field and fire seasons.

**4. Who administers the USFS Saw program?**

- The USFS Saw Program is administered by the National Saw Program Manager and Regional Saw Program Managers, who collectively make up the Saw Program Technical Advisory Group (SPTAG).

**5. What is the difference between a volunteer partner group and a cooperator group?**

- For the purposes of the saw program a volunteer is any person who is signed up under an OF 301A or OF301B. Volunteer partner groups are organized groups of volunteers who are signed up under and OF301A/B. The FS is responsible for tort and workman's compensation claims for these individuals.
- For the purposes of the saw program a cooperator group is an organization with paid employees working under agreement with the FS to do work on NFS lands. The organization is responsible for tort and workman's compensation claims for their members.

**6. Does the saw policy apply to contractors?**

- The saw policy does not apply to contractors, special use permittees or to a contractor of a partnering organization. This includes contractors working under a cooperator through a stewardship agreement. Contractors and permittees are required to abide by OSHA regulation 29 CFR 1910.266 – Logging Standard.

**7. Are hand saws covered under this policy?**

- Bow saws, pruning saws, brush saws, and pole saws are not covered in this policy unless they are used for cutting material larger than 5"

**8. Are battery powered saws covered under this policy?**

- Battery powered saws are covered under this policy and must be equipped with the same safety components as a gasoline powered saw, apart from a spark arrestor and vibration dampening.

**9. What are the different levels of sawyer certifications?**

- There are three types of certifications for each type of saw (crosscut or chain saw)
  - i. A level sawyers may cut in the least complex situations
  - ii. B level sawyers may cut in moderately complex situations
  - iii. C level sawyers may cut complex situations
- There is also a C sawyer evaluator level. These are highly qualified sawyers who have demonstrated they have the knowledge and skill to instruct and evaluate at the C sawyer level. They must maintain proficiency as a C level sawyer.

**10. How do the NWCG positions of FAL1/2/3 relate to the USFS qualifications of Sawyer level A/B/C?**

- The positions of FAL1/2/3 are used by NWCG to identify sawyers mobilized to wildland fire and other emergency incidents. These sawyers are qualified to fell and buck.
- FAL1 is equivalent to Sawyer level C, felling and bucking. FAL2 is equivalent to Sawyer level B, felling and bucking. FAL3 is equivalent to Sawyer level A, felling and bucking.
- Bucking only certifications are not valid for fireline operations
- For the FS, FAL1/2/3 designations are used on Fireline Qualifications cards and in IROC for the purposes of mobilization.

**11. Is it possible to be certified for Bucking only?**

- Sawyers may be certified as bucking only at any level and for both chain saws and crosscut saws.

**12. How long will my saw certification card be valid under the new policy?**

- Sawyer certifications are valid for three years from date of issuance and are valid on all National Forest System (NFS) lands.

**13. Is first aid and CPR required for all sawyers?**

- All saw operators must maintain a current first aid and CPR certification except for crosscut saw trainees who are operating under the supervision of another sawyer.

**14. What is the minimum age for sawyers?**

- Chain saw sawyers must be at least 18 years of age. Crosscut sawyers must be at least 16 years of age.

## Training and evaluation

### **15. Who needs to be trained?**

- All saw users must be trained at the appropriate level for the qualification level being sought. Instruction must be through an approved training curriculum by a qualified instructor.

### **16. Where do I get training?**

- Sawyer trainings normally take place in the early spring, prior to field season. Contact your local saw coordinator with questions on when and where training sessions will take place.

### **17. When will the new training curriculum become available?**

- A Train the Trainer workshop with Regional Program managers and key instructors will be held in December 2022, with a planned full roll out for the new training program in January of 2023.
- Once available the new “Developing Thinking Sawyers” curriculum will replace the MTDC Chain Saw and Crosscut Saw training and S-212 for FS employees, volunteers and cooperators.
- An equivalency for S-212 will be granted for Firefighter 2’s who take Modules 1, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3 and 5.

### **18. Who can instruct?**

- Any C level sawyer or a B level sawyer who has a letter of designation from the unit saw coordinator may instruct at the A and B level.
- The certification level of the instructor must be current with the level at which they are instructing (i.e. An instructor with a bucking only certification may only instruct in bucking).

### **19. Can volunteers and Cooperators instruct?**

- A volunteer or cooperator sawyer may instruct based on their level of qualification.

### **20. What is the difference between training and evaluation?**

- Training is when a trainee sawyer is given the knowledge and techniques needed to accomplish a saw operation. They are then given the opportunity to practice and become proficient in those skills.
- Evaluation is when a trainee sawyer can demonstrate their knowledge, skill, and ability with a saw to accomplish a certain objective. Based on their performance, which is compared to a standard, they are awarded a sawyer qualification level.

### **21. Who can evaluate?**

- The certification level of the evaluator must be current to the level at which they are evaluating (i.e., A evaluator with a bucking only certification may only evaluate in bucking scenarios).
- **A level sawyers** must be evaluated by either a B level sawyer who has a letter of designation from the unit saw coordinator or be a C level sawyer. An approved training consultant may also evaluate at the A level.
- **B level sawyers** must be evaluated by a C level sawyer or an approved training consultant.

- **C level sawyers** must be evaluated by two C level sawyers, one of whom must be qualified at the C evaluator level. The second can either be a C level sawyer or a training consultant.
- To become a **C sawyer evaluator** a candidate must participate in a C sawyer evaluation as an evaluator. In addition, they must be evaluated by two current C sawyer evaluators, one of whom will be the Regional Saw Program Manager or a current C sawyer evaluator designee of the same.

**22. Can volunteers and Cooperators evaluate?**

- A qualified volunteer or cooperator sawyer may evaluate other sawyers.

**23. How does a Cooperator group get authorized to conduct sawyer trainings and evaluations?**

- Cooperator groups who want to conduct trainings and evaluations should fill out Form FS-2300 -XX (still waiting on new official form #). Once approved they will be authorized to train and evaluate their members as well as members of other cooperator organizations and FS employees and volunteers.

## Certification

**24. What does certification mean?**

- The certification (signing) of a Sawyer Qualification Card indicates the correct process of training and evaluation as per FSM 2358 has been completed.

**25. Who can certify a National Saw card?**

- Only Forest Service (FS) line officers or Forest service employees with the appropriate delegation may sign sawyer qualification cards for FS employees and FS volunteers (individuals operating under a Of-301 A/B agreement).
- Forest Service Volunteers (individuals utilizing OF-301 A/B agreements) are not authorized to sign sawyer certification cards for any individual.
- Cooperators (paid employees of an organization working under agreement on NFS lands) are only authorized to sign sawyer qualification cards for employees of the same organization.
- Forest Service employees should not sign cards for members of a cooperator organizations.
- Per FSM 2358, Sawyer Certification cards should be signed and issued within 14 days of evaluation.

**26. Do the certifiers of sawyer qualification cards need to be qualified as a sawyer?**

- The certifying official does not need to be qualified as a sawyer. By signing the card, they are validating that the process defined in FSM 2358 for required sawyer training and evaluation has been followed. The certifying official is following the recommendation of the evaluator(s) and the saw program coordinator.

**27. How does a Cooperator group get authorized to certify a USFS National Sawyer Certification card?**

- Cooperator groups who wish to certify FS Sawyer certification cards for their members should fill out Form FS-2300 -XX (*still waiting on new official form #*). Once approved they will be authorized to certify the saw cards for their members.

## Sawyer Database

### **28. What is the National Sawyer Qualification Tracking Database**

- The National Sawyer Qualification Tracking Database was developed to track Agency, volunteer, and cooperator sawyers.
- The database will store information on the sawyers Region, Forest, District or organization and qualification level
- The database will store the sawyers training certificate and evaluation form
- The database will generate a national sawyer certification card and enable its electronic certification by the authorized certifying official
- Signed cards can be emailed to the sawyer and their supervisor

### **29. Who will have access to the database?**

- Each saw coordinator for each unit (Region/Forest/District/program area/partner group/cooperator group) will be granted access to the database.
- Initially each unit will be given two slots. One primary and secondary administrator.

### **30. How does a partner or cooperator organization request access to the database**

- Organizations who would like access to the database should fill out Form FS-2300 -XX (*still waiting on new official form #*). Once approved they will be given access to the database and instruction on its use.

### **31. What is needed to log into the Database?**

- FS employees will need a LincPass (PIV) card for authentication.
- Non-FS employees will have sign using LOGIN.GOV.
- Once granted access to the database, users will be given a password (which can be changed).

### **32. Who will grant access to the database.**

- Regional Saw Program Managers will grant permissions to users within their respective Regions.

### **33. When will the Database be available?**

- Planned deployment of the database is January 2023

### **34. How will the FS ensure saw cards are processed within 14 days?**

- The unit saw coordinators where sawyer evaluations are taking place should communicate with the certifying official prior to the evaluation to notify them that there will be saw cards needing certification and of the timeframe for getting them signed. Certifiers will be notified by email of cards needing certification.