

**APPENDIX D8. Volunteers in the Parks Program
(Local Management Planning Guide Appendix K, February, 1997)**

**The Volunteers-in-the-Parks and Volunteers-in-the-Forests Programs and VIP & VIF
Protection on the Appalachian Trail**

Certain provisions of ATC's Trail crew policy may be required by federal partners if paid or volunteer workers seek full coverage under the following agency sponsored Volunteers-In-Parks (VIP) or Volunteers-In-Forest (VIF) programs:

VIP -- ATC's VIP agreement with the National Park Service provides protection to A.T. maintaining clubs and their members in good standing¹ and their guests. This agreement, signed originally in 1984 and renewed for a new five-year term in 1989, covers clubs and their members on all sections owned or administered by the National Park Service, on state-owned land and on private lands crossed by the A.T. It also covers workers on the six units of the National Park System crossed by the A.T. and on A.T. side trails in these units. To receive VIP protection, workers must be within the scope of ATC's agreement to "operate, develop, maintain, and monitor the Appalachian National Scenic Trail and its side trails."

VIF -- On USDA Forest Service-administered A.T. lands, the club must have a current "Agreement for Sponsored Voluntary Services" with the district or forest supervisor's office which covers club members and their guests. Also, workers must be listed in club records as members in good standing¹ or a guest and must be working within the scope of this agreement.

A summary of the coverage available

A.T. volunteers are considered federal employees for the purposes of medical compensation for work injuries or for tort claims arising out of their activities as volunteers. As "Volunteers in the Parks" (VIPs) or "Volunteers in the Forests" (VIFs), they are entitled, like federal employees, to protection under the Federal Tort Claims Act and the Federal Employees Compensation Act (FECA).

Federal Tort Claims Act--While acting within the scope of their responsibilities to maintain and monitor Trail lands, VIPs and VIFs receive protection for personal liability from any tort claims submitted by Trail users who may have sustained personal or property injury while on the Appalachian Trail.

Federal Employees Compensation Act--For injuries resulting from work on the Appalachian Trail, VIPs and VIFs are entitled to reimbursement for:

- First aid and medical care (including hospital care when necessary)
- Incidental transportation expenses (when travel is necessary to receive medical care)
- Burial and funeral expenses (up to \$800) if death occurs

¹ Some clubs have "guest memberships" to allow unaffiliated workers to sign up on a work trip as "members in good standing." This allows temporary VIP/VIF coverage.

- Possible loss of wage earning capacity benefits

VIPs and VIFs are specifically not entitled to:

- Continuation of Pay (compensation for time lost from their regular job)
- Reimbursement for injuries sustained during law-enforcement/fire suppression
- Reimbursement for personal property loss or damage

Responsibilities under the VIP and VIF Program

Both National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service policy requires basic safety training of workers and satisfactory supervision for volunteers. These federal agencies need assurance that A.T. volunteers get sufficient training and supervision to do the work safely. To summarize responsibilities of volunteers, Trail clubs, and ATC and federal-agency partners:

Volunteers have the responsibility:

- To make sure they have sufficient training and supervision to do the work safely. Club and ATC representatives have information on safety training and supervision.
- To make sure club work records include them by name and that they report their work and work hours to their club supervisor or record-keeper.
- To promptly report any injury or illness that occurs while they're working on the A.T. and to fill out accident (CA-1) or illness (CA-2) report forms as soon as possible. Safety training will include direction for completing forms and for reporting.
- To know where to seek medical care if they need emergency treatment.
- To participate, where appropriate, in an Agency Provided Medical Care program by seeking medical care on the day of the injury, if possible, at a designated medical facility.

A.T. maintaining clubs have the responsibility:

- To provide work and safety training and supervision in cooperation with ATC, NPS, and USFS.
- To keep accurate records of work groups, dates, tasks, and names of participants.
- To be familiar with the Agency Provided Medical Care (AMPC) program where appropriate and the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP) reporting forms and procedures.
- To provide club members with a list of medical facilities where they can obtain treatment.
- To maintain contact with the federal agency and to supervise individual volunteers.
- To work with the federal agencies to determine future work plans.

ATC and the federal agencies have the responsibility:

- To provide work and safety training and supervision in cooperation with A.T. clubs.

- To make sure club work records are complete and the agreement reflects covered participants as those who are on ATC or club records as members.
- To ensure that anyone who is working with the club who is not a club member is covered under an Agreement for Individual Voluntary Services or another Agreement for Sponsored Voluntary Services.
- To provide A.T.-maintaining clubs with a list of medical facilities where volunteers can obtain AMPC, if appropriate.
- To assure adequate administration of OWCP claims and documentation to that end.
- To work with maintainers and clubs to assure safe and effective operations, development, maintenance, and monitoring of the A.T.

Types of medical coverage you can use as a volunteer

VIP/VIF Claim--When a volunteer covered under a VIP/VIF agreement (or a federal employee) is injured while working on the Appalachian Trail, he/she can seek medical treatment that is paid for by the federal workers-compensation program administered by OWCP. As soon as possible after the injured volunteer seeks treatment, the agency files a claim with OWCP using form CA-16 (Authorization for Examination and/or Treatment). OWCP processes the claim and pays the medical facility directly, however, there is often a long delay between treatment and payment. In the interim, the medical facility may request payment directly from the injured volunteer. In this case, the volunteer should seek assistance from the agency and ATC to intervene in the volunteer's behalf.

Agency Provided Medical Care--In some instances, medical costs of a work-related accident may be paid directly by the agency (Agency Provided Medical Care [APMC]) with no requirement for a report to OWCP. APMC is very narrowly defined and must meet the following three conditions:

1. No medical care at all is received, or medical care is received only on the date of injury; and
2. No CA-16 is issued (if any medical care is provided at all, it is paid for by the Agency and not filed as an OWCP claim); and
3. One follow-up visit may be allowed (however, the first day on which medical care is received must be the same day as the injury). The follow-up visit must be during non-duty hours, that is, hours for which work was not scheduled to be performed for the agency.

Club and crew leaders should discuss payment procedures for APMC with their District Ranger, Park Superintendent, or other appropriate agency official before doing any work under the club's Agreements for Sponsored Voluntary Services. Some USFS units have blanket purchase agreements established with medical-care providers in their local areas for first-aid treatment. However, it is the volunteers' option to use the medical-care provider of their own choice.

In order to better manage the safety program of the federal-agency partner and keep costs associated with OWCP to a minimum, please take full advantage of situations which do not require reporting to OWCP by using the APMC program.

Emergency situations dictate securing medical services from the nearest available physician or facility. This does not constitute employee selection or choice of physician and, should further treatment be necessary after the employee is released, he/she is still entitled to select the physician of his/her choice.

In other than emergency cases, volunteers should select a physician located within 25 miles of the volunteer's Trail section or residence. If the incident location is a long way from the volunteer's Trail section or residence, go to the nearest practical medical facility or physician for initial medical care.

Personal Insurance--If you have your own medical insurance and you choose not to file a claim as a VIP or VIF, simply present your own insurance information to the doctor or hospital when you seek treatment. If you elect to use your own insurance, you must follow USFS or NPS procedures for filing an OWCP claim. If you do this, however, you should be aware that the process to seek reimbursement from the federal government can be long and cumbersome. Regardless of who pays for your treatment (your own insurance or the federal government), reporting procedures listed above should be followed as soon as possible.

What to do if you are injured while working on the Appalachian Trail

Under the VIP and VIF programs, Trail volunteers must follow some of the same procedures as federal employees who wish to file an injury claim. If you or a fellow A.T. worker is injured while working on the A.T., please follow the agency procedures (USFS or NPS) outlined below, as appropriate. ATC strongly encourages you to report the injury to the ATC Regional Office as well. Your club may also wish to be notified. Be sure to familiarize yourself with your own club's VIP/VIF, work-trip, and incident-reporting programs.

STEPS TO TAKE WHEN YOU ARE INJURED:

1) Report all injuries as soon as possible (within 24 hours) after the injury occurs even if you don't go to a doctor or hospital.

Contact the appropriate agency partner official (District Ranger, Park Superintendent, etc.) as soon as possible after the injury. (ATC and your club will develop a list of appropriate contacts for your club section.) Obtain a packet containing forms (CA-1 or CA-2, DI-134, etc.) from your trip leader, club, USFS District Office, Park Superintendent's office or ATC Regional Office. Each packet will include detailed instructions for filling out the forms. Return completed forms to the appropriate agency official as soon as possible. These forms serve as documentation of the injury and must be completed whether the injured volunteer seeks immediate medical attention or not. In the event that future treatment becomes necessary, this form serves as proper documentation of the incident.

The agencies need to submit the appropriate forms to the servicing Personnel Office of their unit within three work days. Therefore, you should submit CA-1 or CA-2 to your agency official within 24 hours or no later than two working days after the accident or illness occurred.

2) Emergency treatment may be obtained without prior approval.

If you need immediate medical attention, go directly to the nearest doctor or hospital and seek treatment (see list of hospitals in your area). Prior authorization is not needed for emergency treatment. However, reporting procedures listed above should be followed as soon as possible.

When you reach the medical facility, notify the appropriate agency official about your injury. Tell the doctor or hospital that you were injured while working as an Appalachian Trail volunteer and that the USFS or NPS will either handle payment through AMPC or send the necessary forms for OWCP if appropriate. Give them the name and phone number of the appropriate agency official.

Issuance of a CA-16 makes the injury a reportable accident for the federal unit and the payment and claim must then be handled through the OWCP--an expensive and cumbersome process. Form CA-16 may only be issued by a designated NPS or USFS official.

If for any reason the medical facility refuses to treat you because you do not have a written authorization for treatment (CA-16) from the agency, you may have to receive treatment by your own means and follow USFS or NPS procedures for reimbursement through AMPC or as an OWCP claim, if appropriate, as soon as possible after treatment.