

Back Country Horsemen of Washington Sawyer Certification Program

The legal basis for Back Country Horsemen of Washington to self-certify its volunteer members as sawyers is contained in the provisions of a Letter of Agreement (LOA), file code 1580, between the Pacific Northwest Region of the United States Forest Service (R6) and the Back Country Horsemen of Washington (BCHW) dated November 18, 2016.

This document establishes the BCHW administrative procedures, saw safety, sawyer training and sawyer technical proficiency standards for certification of individual volunteer member sawyers as well as selection and certification criteria for BCHW Instructor/Evaluators.

1. Administrative policies and procedures pertaining to the BCHW sawyer certification and the BCHW Instructor/Evaluator program:

- BCHW Instructor/Evaluators can instruct and certify both members and friends of BCHW.
- BCHW Instructor/Evaluators can instruct and certify in partnership with other Agency approved Instructor/Evaluators.
- BCHW volunteer sawyers will be certified for bucking only. Tree felling is not certified by BCHW. Note: Separate from this program is a cadre of a few BCHW Sawyers that are certified to fell.
- Completion of saw safety and “class room” sawyer training does not constitute certification. Each individual volunteer’s technical proficiency with a crosscut saw and/or chainsaw must be evaluated before that individual will be certified by BCHW.
- Individual sawyers certified at the “A” or “Apprentice” level must recertify each year.
- Individual sawyers certified as “B” or “Sawyer” level must recertify every two years.
- Individual sawyers certified as “C” or “Journeyman” level sawyers must recertify every three years.
- BCHW Instructor/Evaluators must be recertified every three years, but are required to participate in an Instructor/Evaluator Safe Saw Operations workshop annually. This workshop may be held at BCHW Leadership Training or via videoconference or by other electronic means.
- A current list of BCHW certified sawyers will be maintained by the BCHW Executive Director or another person designated by the President of BCHW. The list shall be provided to land management agencies as specified in the LOA.

2. Safety is paramount for BCHW volunteers and staff utilizing crosscut or chainsaws to maintain trails on USFS and other public lands in the State of Washington.

- The basis for the BCHW saw and sawyer safety program shall be the USFS Health and Safety Code Handbook (FSH 6709.11), Forest Service Manual 2358 and Forest Service Saw Operations Guide.
- No saw operations can occur on any BCHW project unless the sawyer has an American Red Cross Basic First Aid card with CPR endorsement or another Washington Department of Labor and Industries recognized equivalent certificate of First Aid/CPR training.
- Working jointly with the BCHW Safety Officer, the BCHW Saw Program Coordinators will develop a Saw Safety Job Hazard Analysis (JHA) for BCHW. Each year those individuals will update the Saw Safety JHAs prior to Leadership Training.
- The BCHW saw safety JHA must be reviewed before each BCHW sanctioned activity where chain saws or crosscut saws will be used. All volunteers present for the activity must be familiar with the hazards of saw operations, the emergency communications plan and the immediate location of first aid supplies.
- Sawyers operating in such a manner as to place themselves or others in danger will be subject to having their certifications withdrawn. No work is authorized to occur without appropriate PPE.

3. Individuals selected to be Instructor /Evaluators must be members of BCHW.

- Volunteers must agree to act as Instructor/Evaluators for a period of 3 years to instruct and certify volunteer sawyers from Chapters in their areas.
- Individuals selected as Instructor/Evaluators will typically be those individuals who would be rated as “C” level or “Journeyman” sawyers. That is, they have many years of safe sawing experience and the technical proficiency to buck larger diameter logs bound in complex situations. Further, individuals selected as Instructor/Evaluators must possess the interpersonal relation and communication skills to effectively instruct and communicate with volunteer members seeking saw certification.
- Individuals selected as Instructor/Evaluators must possess the necessary knowledge, skills and ability to teach in the classroom and to conduct bucking field evaluations for up to 12 to 15 BCHW members seeking sawyer certification. In order to accomplish this, Instructor/Evaluators need effective communication skills, the ability to transfer and relate concepts to others, and the ability to alter training methods to fit the environment and student group.
- Individuals selected as BCHW Instructor/Evaluators must complete a comprehensive safety, safe saw operations and saw maintenance course as well as have their technical proficiency evaluated and certified by the BCHW Saw Program Coordinators in order to certify BCHW volunteer sawyers. This course will be conducted annually or as required by BCHW Saw Program Coordinators.

4. Sawyer training and technical proficiency standards:

- At the time of initial certification BCHW volunteer sawyers must attend a comprehensive sawyer course that specifically addresses saw maintenance, safe sawing operations, and emergency communications. Sawyers must have completed and maintain current First Aid/CPR training. Sawyer training will be based on material contained in the Chain Saw and Crosscut Saw Training

Course Tech. Rep. 0667–2805 (Student) and 2804 (Instructor)–MTDC developed by the USFS Missoula Technology and Development Center.

- BCHW Instructors/Evaluators may collaborate with other Agency approved Instructors/Evaluators in conducting sawyer training and evaluation sessions.
- Following completion of the comprehensive sawyer’s course described above, a BCHW Instructor/Evaluator must assess each individual’s technical proficiency with a chainsaw and/or crosscut saw. Although the technical evaluation is essentially a subjective process, Instructor/Evaluators will utilize the USFS evaluation forms. In addition to technical ability the evaluation will assess the volunteer’s safety attitude and actions in the sawing environment.
- BCHW Instructor/Evaluators will sign and issue certification cards to volunteer sawyers on the date of the technical evaluation. Certification cards are valid through June 30 for one, two or three years (depending on the level of certification) from the date of certification. This process will be followed until the USFS National Sawyer Database becomes operational.
- BCHW Instructor/Evaluators must forward the evaluation form(s) for each volunteer to the BCHW Executive Director or to an individual designated by the President.
- To the maximum extent possible, BCHW sawyer training materials including downloadable parts of Chain Saw and Crosscut Saw Training Course, Tech. Rep. 0667–2805 (Student) and 2804 (Instructor)–MTDC developed by the USFS Missoula Technology and Development Center, the BCHW Saw Safety JHA, Sawyer Certification card and other pertinent information and references will be posted on the BCHW website for Instructor/Evaluator use.

Issued February, 2017

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