

Safety Checklist for Trail Work Days (useful for trail walks, too)*

Preparation:

- ❑ A clear and attainable goal for the day, a work plan and a required tool and materials list. Focus your efforts to minimize the number of tools.
- ❑ Tools: sharp and in good repair. Provide crew with a clothing and equipment list from among the following: hat, hard hat, long-sleeve shirt, long pants, cool clothing, coat, rain gear, gloves, boots, sunscreen, sunglasses, food, water, bug dope, goggles or safety glasses, ear protection, etc.
- ❑ Water and cups.
- ❑ First Aid Kit.
- ❑ Evacuation plan: how would you get an injured person out and how would an EMS crew get in?
- ❑ Cell phone with numbers for emergency services; confirm you'll have a signal at the work site.
- ❑ Deal with insurance needs and get *hold harmless* waivers.
- ❑ Tech-nu lotion/soap and Fels Naptha soap for poison ivy.
- ❑ Tick repellent, pliers and info about protecting against and removing them.
- ❑ Gloves, if crew cannot supply their own; bring extras even if they do.
- ❑ Check the weather report with heat exhaustion, hypothermia and lightning in mind.

Before you Start:

- ❑ Confidentially, collect information about medical conditions of the crew: asthma, bee sting allergy, chronic back/joint condition, etc.
- ❑ Assess adequacy of crew's clothing and equipment.
- ❑ Assume no prior knowledge of safety.

Start-ups:

- ❑ Designate a roving Trail Boss.
- ❑ Establish a chain of command for decision-making.
- ❑ Work Defensively. Continuously wonder "What if..." as in What if that tree falls? What if those rocks slide? What if someone gets cut badly?
- ❑ Authorize (indeed, require) **every** person to speak up when he or she spots a potential problem. Agree on a signal for "everyone pause until we solve the problem I see," such as "STOP!" No grief is to be heaped on the person who causes a false alarm.
- ❑ Preach safety rules and practice them to set the right example.
- ❑ Precede the start of the day with a Tailgate Safety Talk:
 - ❑ to preview each day's goal,
 - ❑ to point out risks,
 - ❑ to request suggestions for improvements,
 - ❑ to set the rules and expectations and
 - ❑ to shift everyone's minds into safety and teamwork gear.
- ❑ Remind everyone to keep a straight back and lift with the legs. Establish signals for lifting and carrying in groups of two or more.

- ❑ Circle of Safety –or- Circle of Danger: establish a 10-foot clear zone around each worker when working or walking. “I’m working inside my dime.” Passage through someone else’s “dime” requires acknowledgement in advance. Each crew person is responsible for keeping his or her Circle clear.
- ❑ Stabilize the footing of work areas as much as possible by clearing loose rock, sticks, etc.
- ❑ Teach how to carry tools: at your side with sharp end pointed away. Use sheaths and guards. Never on your shoulder!
- ❑ Give permission for each person to set their own limits and take breaks. “Don’t do any job you feel uncomfortable about.”
- ❑ Take ticks seriously. Offer bug repellent. Encourage people to tuck in their pants legs.

During the day:

- ❑ Close the trail work area to users – or – make arrangements for the passage of users through the work area: escort with an explanation, move crew off the trail and stand quietly for passage of horses, etc.
- ❑ Encourage crew to eat snacks; hungry crews are distracted, weak, and short-tempered.
- ❑ Have scheduled water breaks. Exhort crews to drink **before** they feel thirsty; thirsty crews have poor judgment. (Yellow urine means you’re already dehydrated.)
- ❑ Watch for hypothermia or heat exhaustion.
- ❑ When weather compromises vision, footing and tool safety, end the work day.
- ❑ Stop work and take cover at the **first sign** of lightning.
- ❑ Point out hazardous plants: poison ivy and oak, nettles, thorns, etc.
- ❑ Quietly dismiss any crew member who is a hazard.

After lunch:

- ❑ It’s a dangerous time for injury, so before re-commencing:
 - ❑ stretch lightly to loosen tight muscles,
 - ❑ have a refresher Tailgate Talk to re-focus attention, and
 - ❑ review the day’s goal and the morning’s accomplishments.

Late in the day:

- ❑ Watch for fatigue and end the day before it leads to accidents.

The Five Fundamentals

1. The Right Protective Gear
2. The Right Food & Water
3. The Right Work Plan and Tools
4. The Right Training
5. The Right Attitude

Adapted by John Monroe of NPS Rivers & Trails from SCA’s **Lightly on the Land and AMC’s **Complete Guide to Trail Building and Maintenance**.*