



POLICY # 0316a

Amended 11/16/2023

## **Backcountry Horsemen of California Sawyer Certification Program**

**The legal basis for Backcountry Horsemen of California to certify its volunteer members as sawyers is contained in the provisions of USDA FOREST SERVICE MANUAL 2300, Chapter 2350 – Trail, River, and Similar Recreation Opportunities, March 29, 2023.**

**This document establishes the BCHC 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 BCHC Instructor/Evaluators.**

1. Administrative policies and procedures pertaining to the BCHC sawyer certification and the BCHC Instructor/Certifier program:
  - BCHC Instructor/Certifiers will instruct and certify current members of BCHC.
  - BCHC volunteer sawyers will be certified for bucking only. Tree felling **is not** certified by BCHC at this time.
  - Completion of saw safety and “classroom” 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 BCHC.
  - Individual sawyers certified as “A” level must recertify every three years
  - Individual sawyers certified as “B” or “Sawyer” level must recertify every three years.
  - Individual sawyers certified as “C” or “Journeyman” level sawyers must recertify every three years.
  - A current list of certified BCHC member sawyers will be maintained by the BCHC Education V.P. or another person designated by the President of BCHC. The list will be available to land management agencies through the Forest Service “National Sawyer Qualification Tracking Database”.
  
2. Safety is paramount for BCHC volunteers and staff utilizing crosscut or chainsaws to maintain trails on USFS and other public lands in the State of California.
  - No saw operations can occur on any BCHC project unless at least one member of each saw set, that is sawyer or swamper, has a Basic First Aid card with CPR endorsement. First Aid and CPR training must be done in person. Another form of First Aid/CPR training is California Department of Labor and Industries recognized equivalent certificate of first aid/CPR training.
  - Working jointly with the BCHC Safety Officer, the BCHC Lead Instructor/Certifiers will develop a Saw Safety Job Hazard Analysis (JHA) for BCHC. Each year those individuals will update the Saw Safety JHA prior to Leadership Training.
  - The BCHC Saw Safety JHA must be reviewed before each BCHC 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. All PPE will be worn by the sawyer and the swamper.
  - All saw work will be done with the agencies’ approval via a Volunteer Agreement form.



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- Any sawyer who intentionally violates BCHC's safety protocols will have their Sawyer Certification card revoked. To obtain a certification after a card is revoked requires a complete redo of all training, classroom and field, plus the level of certification will revert to "A" level.
- The Incident Corrective Action Committee (ICAC) will review all packing and sawyer incidents to find a corrective action for these incidents.

### 3. **Individuals selected to be Instructor /Certifiers must be members of BCHC.**

- Volunteers are strongly encouraged to act as Instructor/Certifiers for a period of 3 years to instruct and certify volunteer sawyers from Units in their areas.
- Volunteers wishing to be instructors will be required to complete a task book to demonstrate knowledge and skills. Upon successful completion of task book, sawyer will then be given a letter of designation issued by the Saw Program Manager and signed by the BCHC President.
- Individuals selected as Instructor/Certifiers 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/Certifiers must possess the interpersonal relation and communication skills to effectively instruct and communicate with volunteer members seeking saw certification.
- "B" certified sawyers may instruct and certify "A" level sawyers with a letter of designation from the Saw Program Manager.
- Individuals selected as Instructor/Certifiers 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 BCHC members seeking sawyer certification. To accomplish this, Instructor/Certifiers 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 BCHC Instructor/Certifiers must complete a comprehensive safety, safe saw operations and saw maintenance course as well as have their technical proficiency evaluated and certified by the BCHC Lead Instructor/Certifiers and complete the "Saw Instructors Task book" in order to certify BCHC volunteer sawyers. This course will be conducted annually or as required by BCHC Lead Instructor/Certifiers.

### 4. Sawyer training and technical proficiency standards:

- At the time of initial certification, BCHC volunteer sawyers must attend a comprehensive sawyer course that specifically addresses saw maintenance, safe sawing operations, emergency communications and First Aid/CPR. Sawyer training course to be a Nationally Recognized Sawyer Training Course (NRSTC), the USDA Forest Service National Sawyer Training: Developing Thinking Sawyers, (student and instructor), developed by the USFS Missoula Technology and Development Center, and first aid/CPR.
- The Chain Saw and Crosscut Saw Training Course USDA Forest Service National Sawyer Training: Developing Thinking Sawyers, (student and instructor) developed by the USFS Missoula Technology and Development Center. Following completion of the comprehensive sawyer's course described above, a BCHC Instructor/Certifier must assess each individual's technical proficiency with a chainsaw and/or crosscut saw. Although the technical evaluation is



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essentially a subjective process, Instructor/Certifiers will utilize the evaluation forms FS-2300-0052a (2025), “A/B/C” evaluation form, contained in both the Chain Saw and Crosscut Saw Training Course developed by the USFS Missoula Technology and Development Center. In addition to technical ability, the evaluation will assess the volunteer’s safety attitude and actions in the sawing environment. Sawyers must be at least 18 years of age for chainsaw and 16 years of age for crosscut saw. Certification cards are valid for three years.

- BCHC Instructor/Certifiers must forward the evaluation form for each volunteer to the Lead Instructor/Certifier for his/her area. Lead Instructor/Certifiers are responsible to forward a list of all certified sawyers in their respective areas to the BCHC Executive Director or to an individual designated by the President.
- The normal class size for teaching/certifying sawyers will be 10. When the instructor takes the class to the field for the demonstration of skills there will be a smaller suggested limit of 3 students per instructor, especially when sawing. The jobs of each of the three students are as follows: one sawyer, one student responsible for maintaining constant communications with any and all persons surrounding the designated saw area, and one student who is the swamper. The swamper and anyone else desiring access to the designated saw area will not be allowed into the saw area until the sawyer and the instructor authorize entrance. Before this is signaled to the swamper/other person, the sawyer will set the chain brake and so indicate that s/he is ready for access to the instructor.
- The swamper for each saw area will wear all PPE, too.
- To the maximum extent possible, BCHC sawyer training materials including downloadable parts of Chain Saw and Crosscut Saw Training Course, Nationally Recognized Sawyer Training Course (NRSTC), USDA Forest Service National Sawyer Training: Developing Thinking Sawyers, (student and instructor) developed by the USFS Missoula Technology and Development Center, the BCHC Saw Safety JHA, and other pertinent information and references will be posted on the BCHC website for Instructor/Certifier use.