

Professionalism in the Workforce

Background:

NPS Director's Order #7 addresses the Volunteers-in-Parks (VIP) Program on a service-wide level of the NPS. It professionalizes the volunteer workforce, and provides volunteers access to some of the same benefits enjoyed by regular government employees – specifically injury and tort protection.

ATCA leadership, on behalf of the NPS, has a commitment to volunteers to provide orientation, training, and other support in a volunteer's efforts to help accomplish the ATCA Mission. Volunteers have a commitment to ATCA to follow established policies and procedures while engaged in these activities.

Policy Statement:

The ATCA respects and values all volunteers as equal partners in accomplishing its mission. Accordingly, opportunities as well as responsibilities exist for volunteers and leadership alike. The ATCA's commitment to volunteers is to maximize the quantity and quality of training opportunities, make all efforts to provide for a safe and productive work environment, and to maintain standards of conduct for the benefit of everyone. The volunteer's commitment to the ATCA is to demonstrate good faith effort in adhering to NPS policies and procedures, and conducting themselves in manners befitting the NPS Volunteers-in-Parks Program. This includes not only to general conduct and/or safety related issues, but behaviors related to maintaining a harassment-free work environment outlined in Directors Order #16E: NPS Anti-Harassment Policy, and the corresponding Reference Manual #16E, found at: (https://www.ps.gov/policy/DOrders/RM-16_Signed_201804_Combined_508_040218.pdf)

Procedures:

Although infrequent, there exists the potential for volunteers to act outside of established policies – either innocently or deliberately.

It is the responsibility of all volunteers to assist one another in communicating and fostering a positive work environment in keeping with established policies, which creates an exemplary Volunteers-in-Parks Program for all involved. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the Superintendent to ensure application and adherence to policies, in order to maintain a safe professional and productive work environment.

NPS Operational Leadership, and the related *Trail Safe!* Program, define behavioral “errors” in language that is recognized and accepted throughout the National Park Service, demonstrates the causal relationship between errors and accidents, and outlines the responsibilities of management in addressing various errors. Volunteers are encouraged to review video Lesson 3 of Trail Safe!, “Error & Accident Causation,” found online at <https://www.anzatrail.org/trailsafe.htm>

Accordingly, the ATCA will rely upon the following general guidelines in addressing volunteer workforce issues.

In cases of simple “Human Error” (i.e. unintentional mistakes, failure to recognize risks, unfamiliar with approved practices or standards, etc.) upon discovery

1. The activity shall be immediately stopped to ensure safety.

2. All “near miss” accidents shall be reported to the Trail Boss or ATCA President for documentation in the NPS’s Safety Management Information System (SMIS). Near Miss accidents are explained in Lesson 3 of *Trail Safe!*
3. Reports of such issues are not a form of punishment. They will help identify potential trends where further orientation or training may benefit all volunteers through an anonymous “lessons learned” format.
4. Corrective action in the form of on-the-spot counseling, further training, or review of policy should be sufficient in correcting the problem. On site crew leaders (including volunteer leaders) shall initiate these actions whenever they are present, with support and assistance from the ATCA staff as needed.

In cases of “Reckless Conduct” (i.e. the conscious disregard of a visible, significant risk) or “Intentional Rule Violation” (i.e. anti-authority behavior), upon discovery:

1. The activity shall be immediately stopped to ensure safety.
2. Anyone with knowledge of the problem shall report it to the Trail Boss, Section Chief, or ATCA President. The ATCA President and NPS JUBA representative shall consult on the appropriate course of action.
3. Disciplinary action is appropriate in cases where known, significant risks are disregarded, or rules are intentionally violated.
4. The degree of response to such violations is at the Superintendent’s discretion. Corrective actions may include verbal warnings, written warnings, or removal from NPS VIP status.

In cases of harassing conduct, volunteers shall immediately report the allegations to the ATCA phone line, (520) 841-6944 or to the current President by completing a “contact us” form on the website www.anzatrail.org