

Canadian Birkebeiner Society

Safe Practice Implementation Protocol #001 Trail Maintenance Activities in the CLBPR

Note: Overall guidelines for supervisor and workers responsibilities for SPIP development and implementation are presented in the introduction to Appendix II of the CBS HEM Manual.

Scope:

This SPIP ensures that all CBS workers are aware of the regulations and guidelines for working as volunteers on the trails within the CLBPR and provides for worker safety during CLBPR-based operations. It assists Volunteer Leaders and workers in organizing their work days while recognizing tasks or conditions that may be hazardous and which may require the use of other pre-approved SPIPs. It ensures that proper documentation is maintained with regards to safety records, including incident reporting and hazard identification and provide workers with the skills and guidance to work safely within the CLBPR.

Required PPE: As required by other specific SPIPs.

Recommended PPE: Weather dependent clothing: Good foot-ware: "Visibility" vest

Equipment required: As dictated by the work scheduled.

General Procedures:

Situational Awareness: Situational Awareness is our ability to process what is going on around us. The CBS is committed to providing the following:

- Safe travel and work in the CLBPR.
- Identification and mitigation of hazards encountered as part of our required work.

Equipment/PPE Management: When motorized vehicles are used for travel to work-sites, volunteers should be aware of relevant SPIPs for the vehicles used and be registered users within the CBS HEM system. Tools should be transported to work sites in a safe manner and if on a vehicle should be properly secured.

Risk Management: Risk is inherent in any trail building or maintenance operation. Risk management is incorporated into daily Tailgate Meetings where the work and safety plans are relayed to all workers. These risks might involve traveling to distant worksites and latest information on trail conditions and possible obstructions. The CBS goal is to manage the risks we encounter while working on trails to provide a safe but rewarding experience for our "trailblazer" volunteers. Regular "Trailblazer" volunteers need to possess the training and experience to identify and mitigate hazards. Working and traveling with others is strongly advised and working alone as a CBS "Trailblazer" volunteer would be an exception. Each time CBS volunteers travel to and establish their work-sites, they need to be thinking about how to:

- Identify Hazards (e.g. weather, trail conditions, worksite conditions)
- Assess Hazards (e.g. Hazard trees, unstable slopes?)
- Make appropriate decisions (e.g. Is the hazard significant enough to stop or redirect work?)
- Re-Evaluate Safety of Decision (e.g. Has the hazard been mitigated properly?)

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Volunteers should keep in mind that the public perception of “Volunteer work groups” is that of safety and professionalism. While these groups may be well-trained and experienced in the activity or mode of travel at hand, always be cognizant not to lead the public into a situation that can quickly become hazardous for a lesser experienced individual. Proper control of public access to, or through, worksites will ensure reduced risk to both the public and our workers.

A supply of “visibility” vests is available from the CBS signage shed in the AEP Maintenance Yard and it is recommended that all Trailblazer Volunteers wear safety vests when working in the CLBPR. This provides a professional appearance and guards against becoming unsighted by other users of the CLBPR and particularly hunters during the prime hunting seasons.

Accident and Injury Reporting: CBS Trailblazer volunteers must immediately report all near misses, accidents, and work place injuries to their Volunteer Leader and/or AEP supervisor on-site or upon return from the worksite following the established incident reporting protocol.

Trip Planning: All trail-based work in the CLBPR should take place under the direction of a Volunteer Leader who will have been in contact with AEP staff to agree the location and scope of the work in advance, including requests to AEP for provision of equipment or staff support. It is important that established communication protocols are adhered to and that approximate departure/return times and work plan are known. An agreed communication plan should be established in collaboration with AEP that allows at least periodic interactions between volunteer work groups and AEP staff when necessary. All trail-based activities involving CBS volunteers will be recorded in Tailgate Meeting Forms.

Effective Communication Methods: Cell phone coverage is generally possible within the CLBPR but known “black spots” should be recognized. Text messaging may be more effective than voice communication. Limited cell phone coverage is enhanced during the Birkie event by provision of additional temporary cell towers. Work groups might also consider the use of satellite based “Track my route” and “Track your route” cell phone-based Apps as an alternative means of locating volunteers within the CLBPR.

Solo Travel: It is recommended that CBS volunteers travel in parties of two or more when working in the CLBPR. Working or travelling alone should be considered to be the exception.

Required Equipment: Equipment can be a double-edged sword in the remote CLBPR worksites. Too little equipment creates a hazard of being ill-prepared to face the tasks at hand. Too much equipment slows travelers down and exposes them to hazards for a longer period. Volunteer Leaders and volunteer workers must learn to strike the right balance. AEP guidelines dictate that volunteers should not use powered chain saws within the CLBPR. Therefore, good bush saws should always be available and if possible, used to clear any trail obstructions. No attempt should be made to clear large fallen trees actually on trails, or dangerous “leaners” at risk of creating future obstructions: However, AEP staff should immediately be made aware of these obstructions and hazards as part of regular volunteer work within the CLBPR.

A list of the minimal equipment required when entering the CLBPR as a CBS volunteer:

Summer:

- A workable communications device
- Food and Water
- Rain and cold weather gear, as conditions dictate.

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- Sun protection and insect repellent, as conditions dictate
- Personal first aid supplies and group access to a First Aid Kit
- Navigation equipment (GPS, trail map, and compass)
- Appropriate foot wear and clothing for job, terrain, and weather
- At least one good hand bush saw for clearing obstructions

Winter:

- A workable communications device
- Food and Water
- Rain and cold weather gear, as conditions dictate.
- Sun protection, as conditions dictate
- Personal first aid supplies and group access to a First Aid Kit
- Navigation equipment (GPS, trail map, and compass)
- Appropriate foot wear and clothing for job, terrain, and weather
- Fire lighting capabilities
- At least one good hand bush saw for clearing obstructions

Training: Volunteer Leaders and employees should always evaluate the scope of work, final objectives, and seasonal weather conditions when scheduling and preparing for CLBPR work projects. Whatever the hazard or job environment, prior training and established competence will help ensure that CBS volunteers safely perform the task at hand. The appropriate Formal Hazard Assessment will identify the minimum training standards that are required of volunteers before undertaking high-risk activities.

The CBS will ensure that all volunteers receive adequate training and proven experience in activities where enforcement of training requirements is considered to be a specific response to identified high-risk activities. Records of training received and certifications obtained will be part of the CBS HS documentation process.

As a largely volunteer based organization, disciplinary enforcement of worker HEM requirements as set out in the CBS HS Manual is not considered to be an effective process. However, Volunteer Leaders have the responsibility to remove volunteer workers from any work site if there are concerns about unsafe work practices. Ongoing concerns of this nature can most constructively be dealt with by finding alternative volunteer work opportunities for those involved.

Key Do's and Don'ts

Do

- Plan all work projects in advance
- Participate in the Tailgate meeting exercise
- Be aware of risks created by hot, cold and wet weather and of changeable weather conditions
- Use appropriate tools for the tasks to be completed
- Work in groups
- Carry a means of communication and be aware of key ERP information

Don't

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- Enter the CLBPRAs as CBS volunteers without making prior arrangements with AEP staff
- Continue working when tired or cold
- Work alone
- Fail to carry a means of communication and key ERP information