

Risk Tree Awareness Form

Site Name: _____

Date: _____

Monitor Name: _____

Email: _____

Land Management Agency: _____

A.T. Club: _____

Potential Targets: **Areas of congregation** including shelters, privies, campgrounds adjacent to shelters, parking areas, bridges, and vistas. Evaluate risk trees within 2 ½ tree lengths of the area of congregation.

List of common tree defects: Cracks, weak branch unions, stem or branch decay, fungal fruiting bodies, cankers, dead tree/top/branches, pests such as emerald ash borer, root damage/disease, abnormal/severe lean or poor architecture.

Important: Do not flag or otherwise mark any risk trees.

<u>Tree Number</u>	<u>Tree Species</u>	<u>DBH</u>	<u>Tree Height</u>	<u>Defect/Hazard</u>	<u>Target</u>	<u>Distance To Target</u>	<u>Photo Taken</u>
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							

Additional Site Info (please note Wilderness, significant Ash tree component, storm damage, etc):

Recommendations:

Actions Taken/Date (Land Manager):

Forms should be submitted to ATC at varo@appalachiantrail.org and agency partner.

Risk mitigation is the role of the land management agency.

Risk Tree Awareness Guide

Why we monitor and report risk trees: Trees fall and fail for various reasons and at different rates. Even green trees without obvious defects can fall and cause damage to A.T. facilities. A.T. volunteers, section maintainers, shelter overseers, hike leaders, etc. as part of their time on Trail, can identify and report tree damage and defects that may be a danger to visitors or facilities using the risk tree awareness form above. The sooner club leaders, ATC, and land managers are aware of possible hazards, the sooner further review and mitigation action can occur.

- ◇ This guidance is rudimentary and only covers the basics. For more info and training on species-specific defects and indicators, a more comprehensive look at indicators, detailed ranking and prioritization tools, and more understanding in general about identifying risk trees, please attend a future virtual or field training.
- ◇ Individuals performing this activity should only document and report - not flag or mark any potential risk tree, or remove tree with chainsaw or crosscut without coordination with ATC or land management agency. In order to operate a chainsaw or crosscut saw on AT lands individuals need to be either a USFS or NPS certified sawyer.

What are risk trees: Damaged, weak, dying, dead, or structurally defective trees are part of the natural landscape through which the Appalachian Trail passes, and often provide important habitat for wildlife and a means to return nutrients to the forest. The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) in its publication Tree Hazards - Recognition and Reduction in Recreation Sites defines a tree hazard as any potential tree failure due to a structural defect that may result in property damage or personal injury. The National Park Service in its Hazard Tree Guidelines says that a hazardous tree specifically refers to a plant with a significant flaw which, when coupled with a location in an identified public use area, makes that tree an actual risk.

Where should we be looking: When on the lookout for potential risk trees, only Areas of Congregation should be monitored.

Areas of Congregation include:

- ◇ Designated campsites (these are typically signed and on official maps and inventories).
- ◇ Shelters, Privys, and associated camping areas
- ◇ Other publicly accessible structures including bridges
- ◇ Trailheads
- ◇ Vistas, Overlooks
- ◇ Improved water sources (such as hand pumps)




Areas of Congregation do not include:






- ◇ Non-designated, dispersed (visitor created & selected) camping areas
- ◇ A.T. or side trail (not associated with an Area of Congregation)
- ◇ Trail junctions
- ◇ Undeveloped water sources (includes blue blazed side trails)
- ◇ Structures and locations on APPA lands that are not included in the FMSS Inventory.








What to Look For: When monitoring (Areas of Congregation only) always look for damaged trees with defects at least 2.5 tree lengths away from the site being monitored. Using this buffer adds a distance cushion between users & facilities and the potential risk tree and its debris if/when it fails.

- ◇ Be systematic when looking for defects—start from the top of the tree and work your way down to the trunk and roots
- ◇ Take photos of tree and defects/failures; if possible, include individual or structure to provide scale
 - ◇ **Do not mark or flag potential risk tree**
- ◇ Once the Area of Congregation is monitored using the above form, potential risk trees identified and documented, share information and photos with club leader, ATC, and land management agency.
- ◇ Risk Mitigation is the role of the land management agency.
- ◇ If risk mitigation isn’t possible within a short timeframe, options such as site closure may be warranted.

Examples of Common Tree Defects and Indicators (this list does not include all possible defects):

Top:	Dead Tops	
Crown:	Broken, hanging, cracked branches	 

Crown:	<p>General decay</p> <p>Dead branches w/in canopy</p>	
	<p>Weak branch unions</p> <p>Split branch crotch</p>	
Trunk:	<p>Fungal conks (sign of heart rot)</p>	
	<p>Rot or hollowness in heartwood</p>	
	<p>Large canker (deep enough to weaken the main stem)</p>	

Butt/Stump/ Roots:	Wounds, open or closed, from fire or user damage	 
	Butt conks, Basal decay	 
	Dead Cambi- um	
	Unfirm Roots Root Lifting	 
Insect Damage	Emerald Ash Borer—Ash blonding	