National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

National Interagency Fire Center
Idaho

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National Park Service Wildland Fire Management Careers

Looking for a job and/or a career which combines love of the land, science and technology skills, leadership and people skills? Then you may be the right person for a job or career in wildland fire management in the National Park Service.

The faces of wildland firefighting

There are many different specializations in the NPS Wildland Fire Management Program, some of which require special skills and training, and all of which require enthusiasm and dedication. This is a competitive arena which places physical and mental demands on employees.

Employees are hired for temporary and permanent jobs, year round depending upon the area of the country. As an employee's competencies and skills develop, their opportunities to advance in fire management increases.

Positions Available

Firefighter: Serves as a crewmember on a handcrew, using a variety of specialized tools, equipment, and techniques on wildland and prescribed fires. Job announcements for firefighter positions may also be titled as Forestry Technician or Range Technician.

Handcrew members use specialized firefighting tools, including the pulaski.

Engine Crewmember: Serves on a fire crew that uses equipment associated with wildland fire engines, including pumps and hoses as well as traditional handcrew equipment.

Hotshot: Experienced firefighter who works on a hotshot crew specializing in extended attack on wildland fires. There are two hotshot crews in the NPS - Arrowhead Hotshots and Alpine Hotshots, located at Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks and Rocky Mountain National Park, respectively.

Smokejumper: Specialized, experienced firefighter who works as a team with other smokejumpers, parachuting into remote areas for initial attack on wildland fires. The National Park Service does not generally employ smokejumpers since there is no NPS smokejumper base or crew, but they are hired by the US Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management. More information is available at http://1.usa.gov/ZJDSpz and http://on.doi.gov/146lr7l respectively.

Helitack Crewmember: Serves as initial attack firefighter and support for helicopter operations on large fires.

Wildland Fire Module Member: Serves as a crewmember working on prescribed fire, fuels reduction projects, and wildfires.

Dispatcher: Serves as central coordinator for relaying information regarding a fire as well as ordering personnel and equipment.

Fire Lookout: Serves as locator for fires in remote locations and informs emergency response units of new fires. Please note that there are also positions as volunteer fire lookouts through the National Park Service Volunteers-In-Parks Program (VIP).

Fire lookouts keep a watchful eye for new fires.

Fire ecologists collect data to learn about how fire affects ecosystems.

Fire management can be an exciting, rewarding career in the National Park Service with many opportunities.

GIS Specialist: Uses satellite technology to map fire perimeters, vegetation areas, and other scientific studies.

Fire Effects Monitor / Fire Ecologist: Study and collect data on the effects of fire on plants and animals in burned and unburned areas.

Other Support Positions: Warehouse worker, administrative positions, management positions, vehicle operators and other positions will be advertised under several job titles.

Requirements

Generally, unless a different minimum entry age is contained in the standard or examination announcement for a particular position, applicants for any position in the competitive service must be (1) at least 18 years old, or (2) at least 16 years old and:

- Have graduated from high school or been awarded a certificate equivalent to graduating from high school; or
- Have completed a formal vocational training program; or
- Have received a statement from school authorities agreeing with their preference for employment rather than continuing their education; or
- Be currently enrolled in a secondary school and either work only during school vacation periods or work part-time during the school year under a formal student employment program.

An applicant must be at least eighteen (18) years old to become a wildland firefighter.

College coursework or a college degree aids in being hired at a higher pay level. The coursework or degree can be in a variety of fields, but many choose forestry, biology, natural resource management, and the like, especially for wildland fire management. If you are entering into the wildland fire arena without any previous experience you may want to complete some basic classes locally, which will increase your chances of being hired, such as I-100 Introduction to the Incident Command System, S-130 Firefighter Training and S-190 Introduction to Wildland Fire Behavior. Contact your State Forestry agency or a nearby community college to see if they offer any of these classes in person. Additionally, these courses are offered online or as "blended" courses through the NWCG training website.

Requirements vary by job so read the announcement or contact the specific location where you would like to work for more details.

Pay and Benefits

Employees are hired under the Federal Civil Service System. Pay ranges from about $12.00 per hour to over $17.00 per hour, depending upon the position and your experience. Firefighting positions are paid overtime for any hours worked beyond the regular shift.

Temporary and permanent employees receive sick leave, paid vacation, paid holidays, and training. Permanent employees also receive health and life insurance and are covered by the Federal Employee Retirement System. Some fire positions qualify for retirement after 20 years.

Where to Find Job Announcements

USAJobs – http://www.usajobs.gov. USAJobs is the official site for federal job announcements. You may search for wildland fire jobs as well as other federal jobs across multiple agencies and geographic areas. Each job announcement will have specific information on how and where to apply as well as who to contact if you have questions. Typically, jobs as a basic firefighter will be also be listed as Range / Forestry Technician.

Fire Integrated Recruitment Employment Systems (FIRES) – http://www.firejobs.doi.gov. Under this hiring process you can select up to seven different fire job locations within the Department of the Interior using one application.

NPS Fire Management Job Searches – You can find National Park Service jobs on the USAJobs website by doing a keyword search for "National Park Service fire" (if you exclude the quotes around the phrase, you will get more results for your search).

For more information, contact a specific national park unit to learn more about their fire management program and what jobs may be available – http://www.nps.gov/aboutus/contactus.htm.

At times, helicopters may be the quickest and most cost efficient way to transport fire staff.

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