



How to Become a Wildland Firefighter

Interested in becoming a wildland firefighter?

People interested in a job as a seasonal firefighter must apply to the agency that interests them. The primary employers of wildland firefighters are the US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and US Fish and Wildlife Service. State lands or state forestry departments also employ seasonal firefighters. Hiring procedures for each agency are different, so make sure you know the guidelines before you apply. You can find guidelines on most agency websites.

To meet the minimum wildland firefighter qualifications, you must be at least 18 years of age and able to pass a physical fitness test (see below).

STEPS TOWARD FIREFIGHTER JOBS WITH ARIZONA STATE FORESTRY DIVISION:

Arizona State Forestry Division usually employs seasonal firefighters through local fire departments. Here are the steps you need to take:

Step 1— Find a Sponsor

Find a local fire department or local agency to sponsor you. The best way to do this is to sign up as a volunteer or reserve firefighter for your local fire department. That department will much more likely invest in you if you dedicate time to assisting them with their mission.

Step 2 — Take Firefighter Courses

If you have a sponsor, sign up for and successfully complete the NWCG Basic Firefighter course (S-130) and the Introduction to Fire Behavior course (S-190). This is a 32-40 hour classroom- and field-based course. If you cannot secure a sponsor, you may also find these courses taught at various community colleges in Arizona. Search the internet for firefighter academies in Arizona to find specific course requirements and dates. Make sure to keep your certificates!

Step 3 — Pass a Physical Fitness Test

You now have to pass a “Work Capacity Test”, more commonly called the “pack test”, which entails walking 3 miles in 45 minutes with a 45-pound pack. Your sponsoring agency will administer the test to you, after you have taken and successfully completed the courses listed in Step 2.

Step 4 — Be Available for Fires

If you have completed all of the above steps, your sponsoring agency may list you as an available resource with the agency or fire department. This means you may be dispatched to wildfires as they occur and as the department or agency needs your assistance. You may continue as a volunteer or on-call firefighter while maintaining another job.

Additional information on federal firefighting jobs can be found on the NWCG website as well as on the USAJOBS website. Check with your local fire department for additional information on state firefighting jobs.

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