

# **Wildland Firefighter Job Description**

## **U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Fire Management Branch**

### **DUTIES**

The majority of the duties performed by a wildland firefighter are outdoors. Experiencing elements of all four seasons is not uncommon. Depending upon where you are stationed, you may experience all four seasons within a few days. Most duties are related to prescribed burning, wildfire suppression, and fire preparedness. These duties include serving as a firefighter or engine operator during prescribed burning and wildfire suppression activities; conducting regular maintenance and repairs on various equipment such as fire engines, tractors, mowers, chain saws, and hand tools; serving as a crew member during fire break preparation which involves rock removal, mowing, trimming, tree and brush removal. You may have the potential to assist other refuges as well as other federal or state agencies throughout the nation with prescribed burning and wildfire suppression. When not involved with fire related activities, you may provide assistance in conducting natural resources related project work on behalf of the Fish and Wildlife Service's many refuges throughout the country.

### **PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS**

Each position is classed as an arduous fire position under the Interagency Wildfire Qualifications Standards adopted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. As a condition of employment, you must pass a pre-employment medical examination (which the Service will pay for). You will be required to achieve an arduous rating on the "Pack Test," which requires you to walk 3 miles with a 45 pound backpack in 45 minutes or less. The Pack Test is correlated to measures of aerobic and muscular fitness as well as performance in field tasks such as working with hand tools or carrying loads over rough terrain. The Pack Test will be administered when you first report for duty. If you cannot meet the required fitness score for the Pack Test when it is initially administered, you must retake the test within a two week period. In the event you are unable to meet and maintain the fitness requirements you may be terminated in accordance with applicable personnel regulations.

Most positions require working on an engine or hand crew. This will entail working with as few as two individuals to as many as 20 individuals. Whether it is two or 20, it is imperative that you can work well with others. Communication with others is a vital part of the success of the job. Primary contacts are generally other crew members, crew supervisors, and others in the wild land fire management organization.

Most seasonal positions work 40 hours per week, but part-time and "intermittent" openings may be an option occasionally. Some positions require non-standard work schedules such as four 10-hour days, ten days on and four days off, or other variations. Early and late season employment is on an as-needed basis, depending on weather, fire season, and budgets. A 40-hour week is not guaranteed during pre or post-season work.

### **EQUIPMENT REQUIRED**

If selected for a fire position you will be expected to wear protective and safety equipment. The government will supply most items - hard hat, leather gloves, fire resistant clothing, backpack, tent, etc. However, you will need to purchase a GOOD pair

of firefighting boots. You will be reimbursed up to a certain amount for the boots. It is a very good idea to break the boots in BEFORE the first day of work. Other than boots, you will only need to furnish your personal belongings.

### OUTDOOR SKILLS

Can you drive a truck with a manual transmission? Can you change a tire? Can you run a chainsaw? Can you pitch a tent? Can you tie half a dozen knots and sharpen a knife? Can you read a topographic map? Can you use a compass? Learning how to get by and make do in the outdoors comes in handy. If you don't currently have any outdoor skills - ARE YOU WILLING TO LEARN? If you are willing to learn the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is willing to train you. Any outdoor skills that you currently possess will be to your benefit.

### HOUSING

Many of the refuges in this region provide housing for their seasonal fire crews for a nominal fee. In some cases the location of the position may be remote and refuge housing may be the only option. On the other hand some refuges are located near small towns that have properties available to rent.

### CAREERS

Experience on a fire crew can be just a memorable summer job, or it can lead to a career in wild land fire management. Wild land fire experience is very beneficial to anyone interested in pursuing a career in fire management, wildlife management, field biology, ecology, forestry, or range management. Hopefully you now know "what to expect" when applying for a USFWS wild land firefighter position. If the information you were provided with sounds interesting then this may be an adventure you will want to take.

Federal web sites with firefighting job listings:

<http://www.usajobs.opm.gov>

<http://jobs.fws.gov>

<http://www.firejobs.doi.gov>