

Wildland Firefighter



Apprenticeship Program

The National Interagency Wildland Firefighter Apprenticeship Program is an accredited, educational program designed to enhance and develop future Fire and Aviation Managers. This program operates under an agreement with the Department of Labor, USDA Forest Service, USDI Bureau of Land Management and the National Park Service and is hosted by the Pacific Southwest Region. The intent of the program is to assist individuals who want a career in Fire Management within the federal fire agencies. It is designed to take a career entry firefighter and provide education, training and work experience that will allow an individual to reach journey level status as a wildland firefighter.

Apprentices may be hired under a variety of hiring authorities. Apprentices are required to sign a Mobility Agreement (Agency Specific) stating that they may be placed at different duty stations within their selected region for their supplemental training and/or at time of conversion. Additionally, they are required to sign a Service Agreement (Agency Specific) stipulating that they will complete the program and remain in federal service for a period of three times the length of their training period. Apprentices

hired on a unit where a Commercial Drivers License is required will be subject to drug testing.

The apprentice is required to successfully complete a residential four-week Basic Academy, a prescribed program of Technical Related Supplemental Training, supervised on-the-job training, and an additional residential four-week Advanced Academy. The formal academy training is held at the Wildland Fire Training and Conference Center located in Sacramento, California.



Upon successful completion of all the requirements of the Apprenticeship program, which include the Basic and Advanced Academies, on-the-job training/Work

Process hours, and the Technical Related Supplemental Training hours, an apprentice will be non-competitively promoted to the GS-5 Senior Firefighter level and converted to a career conditional appointment with a Federal Wildland Agency. At conversion they will have received all formal training to qualify as a Firefighter I / Squad Boss and Single Resource Boss Trainee as identified by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG).

Program Outline

The term of apprenticeship consists of 24 to 48 working months of training and experience (4000 hours) in wildland fire management. This is divided into three major areas:

1. Formal Academy Training (2 four-week residential academies)
2. On-the-job training and work experience (4000 hours)
3. Technical Related Supplemental Training (283 hours)

In addition to the above requirements, all apprentices must pass a physical fitness requirement consisting of passing the Work Capacity Test (Pack Test) at the arduous level as well as maintaining the identified academic standards throughout the program.

Daily aerobic and physical fitness training will be part of both residential academies. Apprentices are expected to arrive in good



physical shape and be able to run 1.5 – 5 miles daily. Apprentices are evaluated at the start and completion of the academies in the following areas: 1.5 mile run, sit-ups, push-ups, and pull-ups. Participation in a daily aerobic program is highly recommended prior to arriving at the academies to prevent injury due to over-exertion when unprepared for running and hiking with a full pack.

Academy Curriculum

Basic Academy – 157 hours

- Academy, and Program Orientation
- Nutrition, Wellness and Physical Fitness
- Basic Fire Prevention
- S-190 Introduction to Fire Behavior
- (Exam only)
- S-131 Advanced Firefighter
- Tactical Decision Making
- L-280 Followership to Leadership
- First Responder Medical
- Wildland Fire Skills
 - Map Reading and Compass Use
 - Communications and Radio Use
 - Fire Shelters
 - Belt Weather Kits
 - Handtool Use
 - Human Factors

Advanced Academy – 154 hours

- Academy Orientation
- S-234 Ignition Specialist
- S-270 Basic Air Operations
- S-290 Intermediate Fire Behavior
- Fireline Leadership
- Fuels Management and Wildland Fire Use
- Fire Fatality Case Studies
- Physical Fitness

The above curriculum must be completed in the formal academy setting irrespective of whether an apprentice has previously taken the courses.

Academic Standard

Basic Fire Behavior (S-190) is a baseline course for successful participation in the Apprenticeship Program and must be passed at 80% or greater on the first day of the Basic Academy. Apprentices who fail this exam will be removed from the Academy and the Apprenticeship Program.

Apprentices are required to pass all academy course material at the 80% level with the exception of those currently identified by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG)

as having a 70% passing score. If an apprentice fails an exam (with the exception of S-190), they will be allowed to retake only once during the academy. The required academic score must be achieved on the retake to pass the class. Regardless of how high the score is on the retake, the minimum required passing score will



be recorded. A test failure in a second course during an academy will result in the apprentice being removed from the Academy and the Apprenticeship Program. All exams will be written exams with the exception of the manipulative skills tests.

Work Processes (On-the-Job Training)

On-the-job training consists of 4000 hours of supervised work experience in all phases of the occupation necessary to develop the skill and proficiency of a wildland fire fighter. These activities are referred to as “work process hours.”

The apprentice will be given credit towards their work processes for previous experience on the basis of one month credit (at 172 hours) for each month of experience. Credit for previous experience is limited to 2000 hours or approximately 12 months. Additionally, prior to attending their Basic Academy, they must have completed 500 hours of work processes (base and/or overtime) in some combination of Work Process Categories three and four. On-the-job work processes include:

- Category 1: Wildland Fire Safety
- Category 2: Wildland Fire Preparedness
- Category 3: Fire Suppression
- Category 4: Fuels Management
- Category 5: Fire Business Practices
- Category 6: Dispatch Functions
- Category 7: Prevention/Education
- Category 8: Review Local Plans

Technical Related Supplemental Training

This training is completed on the home unit by the apprentice’s immediate supervisor or other local instructors, in small groups or individual instruction with the instructor using demonstration and coaching methods. Each apprentice is required to complete a minimum of 283 hours in the following areas:

Required Courses

- S-190 Introduction to Wildland Fire Behavior (Must be taken prior to attendance at the Basic Academy)
- S-130 Basic Firefighter (Must be taken prior to attendance at the Basic Academy)
- I-100 Orientation to Incident Command System (Must be taken prior to attendance at the Basic Academy)
- Agency Specific New Employee Orientation (Must be taken prior to attendance at the Basic Academy)
- D-110 Dispatch Recorder
- I-200 Introduction to Incident Command System
- S-211 Portable Pumps & Water Use
- S-212 Wildfire Power Saws – Level A
- S-215 (S-205) Fire Operations in the Wildland/Urban Interface
- S-260 Interagency Incident Fire Business Mgt.
- *Supplemental Technical Training Electives. Apprentice is required to complete a minimum of 100 hours of elective courses from the list below:

Elective Courses

- Driver Training
- Hazardous Materials

- Horsemanship Skills
- Wildland Fire Detection
- Aircraft Dispatcher
- Engine Operator Training (BLM Specific)
- P-151 Wildfire Origin and Cause Determination
- S-230 Single Resource Boss, Crew
- S-231 Single Resource Boss, Engine
- S-232 Single Resource Boss, Dozer
- S-233 Single Resource Boss, Tractor/Plow
- S-244 Field Observer
- S-245 Display Processor
- S-248 Status/Check-In Recorder
- S-336 Fire Suppression Tactics
- S-200 Initial Attack Incident Commander



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