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# NATIONAL WILDFIRE COORDINATING GROUP

## How To Become a Wildland Firefighter

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Wildland firefighting agencies operate at the federal level (National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs), the state level (Dept. of Forestry, Dept. of Natural Resources), and at the local level where forest lands tie in with the incorporated area (Fire Science Online, n.d.). Although each agency has its own hiring processes, the following is a general guide to becoming a wildland firefighter.

### **The Basics:**

#### 1. **Training:** Physical and Educational

##### ○ **Physical:**

- Firefighters are held to rigorous fitness standards as much of the job occurs in the outdoors. The *Work Capacity Test* is a series of tests used to determine the capabilities of an individual and ensure he/she is physically able to perform the duties of wildland firefighting. This test is required by every federal agency/bureau before an Incident Qualification Card (red card) can be issued.
- It is also recommended that an individual find out if there are any additional standards required of a position and what they are so as to prepare in the off season. This can be done by contacting the specific location of potential employment (i.e. local land management office).

##### ○ **Educational:**

- Specific educational requirements are set by each agency. There are multiple areas of academic study that provide credible coursework that is related to various positions within wildland fire. The following are examples of these areas of study:
  - Forestry
  - Agriculture
  - Crop or Plant Science
  - Wildlife Management
  - Range Management or Conservation
  - Watershed Management
  - Natural Resources (except marine fisheries and oceanography)
  - Outdoor Recreation Management
  - Civil or Forest Engineering
  - Wildland Fire Science
  - Soil Science

#### 2. **Application/Employment:**

- Wildland firefighter positions are generally advertised in the off-season (Oct-Dec) and hired as fire season approaches (Jan-Mar).
- Individuals seeking employment should think about applying by Sept/Oct as many announcements close in January.
- Learn more about job openings by visiting <https://www.usajobs.gov/>; keyword: wildland fire.
- Contact the location of potential employment (i.e. local land management office) with additional questions regarding qualifications or standards of a specific position.