

Wildland Firefighter Apprenticeship Program



Begin an exciting career as a wildland firefighter apprentice and challenge yourself to new limits.

The Wildland Firefighter Apprenticeship Program (WFAP) has been operated, funded, and attended by U.S. Forest Service (USFS) personnel for decades. During the last two years, the bureaus within the Department of Interior have worked with the USFS to broaden the scope, hiring procedures and funding mechanisms within the WFAP program to better serve fire personnel across all land management agencies and bureaus. This collaboration has produced a more streamlined procedure for enrollment/hiring of DOI personnel. Collaborative WFAP development ensures the most linear approach to facilitation exists, and that all avenues of early employee development are being considered.

General Requirements and Recommendations

- Must be 18 years old and must have a high school diploma or equivalent GED. In order to qualify for a GS-03, the applicant must have at least 6 months of general experience. If an individual is hired as an apprentice, they will be a federal employee.
- Apprentices will have a day-to-day supervisor such as an Engine Captain or Hotshot Superintendent. They will also have a unit supervisor who will be responsible for their administrative requirements such as QuickTime and Concur. They may also have a Regional or National Apprentice Coordinator who will submit their monthly hours and training completions to the USFS WFAP staff.
- During fire season apprentices will work on handcrews, helitack modules, engine modules, heavy equipment crews or dispatch to attain the minimum-core hours necessary to complete the WFAP. They will also attend various National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) courses and learn fundamental characteristics intrinsic to their profession. Depending upon the previous work hours the apprentice may have already accrued, they will be enrolled in and attend a winter 3-week Basic or Advanced Academy.

- Apprentices will be responsible for tracking and submitting their monthly completion of on-the-job training hours and any other required training that is completed.
- More information can be found in the [Wildland Fire Learning Portal](#) which contains a DOI Apprentice Processing Course. The WFAP Program is located under the National Training Centers and Programs tab.

Recommendations:

- Regional fire management staff should begin familiarizing themselves with the WFAP and seek to advertise, recruit, and enroll GS 3-5 new and current fire personnel.
- Regional and unit fire management staff should ensure an FTE, at the unit level, exists on their organization chart, for both hiring of WFAP personnel and for non-competitive placement of graduating WFAP personnel. This will ensure that unit-level managers are involved, can act as supervisors and that once the WFAP apprentice graduates they will non-competitively be reassigned to a vacant GS-5 position. Having apprentices convert to the units they were hired at has proven successful and crucial to retain graduated WFAP personnel. A typical FTE on a unit organizational chart would be dually labeled, GS-0462/0456-05 WFAP Apprentice/Senior Firefighter.
- DWFM and regions need to seek to actively engage in presenting the WFAP to various interested parties which include, high school students, current GS 3-5 employees, former military, and all other interested potential candidates.

Helpful Links and Contacts:

- [Wildland Fire Apprenticeship Academy](#)
- [Indian Affairs Fire Training and Qualifications](#)
- Mike Black- DWFM Training Specialist and Wildland Fire Apprenticeship Academy Coordinator, michaelj.black@bia.gov, (208) 387-5319