DOI Standard Position Description
PD# DX04100

OPM Official Classification: Wildland Firefighter, GS-0456-05

Organizational Classification: Wildland Firefighter Apprentice, GS-0456-05

Wildland Fire Apprenticeship Program

INTRODUCTION

This is a standard wildland fire management position description intended for use in the Department of Interior (DOI). The standard position description (SPD) is only to be used for positions enrolled as a Department of Labor registered apprentice in the Wildland Fire Apprenticeship Program (WFAP). The position is located on a wildland fire module or crew within the fire management organization. The position serves at the GS-05 level, more skilled developmental capacity as a wildland fire apprentice firefighter on one or more of the following module types: dispatch, engine, handcrew (suppression, fuels, or wildland fire module) or helitack.

Under the guidance and direction of a more seasoned journey-level firefighter, the position performs wildland fire related duties which involve fire prevention, dispatch, planning and fuels management. The incumbent receives instructions on the proper maintenance and repair of firefighting tools, equipment, and facilities. As part of the apprenticeship program, the apprentice attends compulsory training in a residential academy setting.

The more skilled apprentice functions within a training environmental setting to gain more seasonal experience and skills necessary to prepare the incumbent for readiness to obtain wildland fire qualifications for transition and placement into the permanent firefighter position, Wildland Firefighter, GS-0456-05, (DOI SPD# DX00300).

MAJOR DUTIES

Wildland Fire Apprentice Work (60%)

Serves as more skilled Apprentice on a fire crew, performing recurring fire suppression and fuels management developmental duties which provide orientation and familiarization to the work processes and various functional areas of the wildland firefighting career field. The incumbent serves on a handcrew and/or engine prior to completion of the program; not all types are required.

Serves as an experienced member within a wildland fire module or crew in fuels management, fire suppression, monitoring, and post-fire activities, applies an understanding of firefighter safety, fire behavior, topography of the area, weather, fuels, and training in fire management work to recommend and implement tactical directions on attacking, controlling, or mopping up fires, building or patrolling firelines, cleaning up burned areas within firelines, suppressing spot fires, felling snags or trees, and cutting brush. Places caches of equipment and supplies at strategic points.

Observes, collects, and records fire-related data with regards to fuels, topography, eather, fire behavior, fire effects, smoke, and fire location on natural caused fires when applying a strategy other than full suppression. Gathers and preserves evidence for possible actions in prosecuting offenders, under the direction of an investigator, in human caused incidents.

Operates, moves, inspects, and performs preventative maintenance on vehicles and equipment to include crew carriers, fire engines, command vehicles, pickups, and other specialized equipment. Uses judgment to safely operate, maneuver, and set up vehicles and equipment in a variety of environments including urban, grassland, and mountainous terrain. Ensures adherence to vehicle safety procedures when transporting personnel, fuel, and equipment, considering bridge and road limits, equipment weight and length, and weather effects.

In addition, as Apprentice, performs the following duties specific to the crew or module assigned:

- **Engine**: Drives and operates a wildland fire engine, positioning the engine for proper use and operation based on an understanding of engine capabilities and weight limitations. Starts pump engine, primes pump, adjusts engine speed and pump valves, lays hose, and uses appropriate nozzles and makes nozzle adjustments for effective use of water and additives. May perform duties such as water handling or maintenance of specialized equipment in response to wildland urban interface/intermix situations.
- **Crews**: Serves as lookout and locates Fireline and implements appropriate Fireline construction methods necessary (e.g., mineral soil scrape, cup trenching, removal of ladder fuels) to stop fire spread, making adjustments based on terrain and other conditions, and assessing escape routes and safety zones. Conducts tree felling and chainsaw operations, including appropriate snag mitigation. Monitors weather and smoke conditions and reports observations to the crew. Ensures proper refurbishing and resupply of tools, vehicles, food, water, and other supplies.
- **Helitack**: Performs helicopter crewmember duties such as: prepares internal and/or external cargo loads, briefs passengers before takeoff, follows proper procedures for loading/unloading the helicopter, constructs helispots or landing areas, monitors dipsites, and prepares sling load sites. Works with higher-graded firefighters and receives on-the-job training, instruction, and orientation in helicopter operations to include accompanying the pilot on flights, providing radio communications to dispatch and/or ground firefighters, navigating with use of maps, and applying aviation safety regulations.

Other Training Assignments (40%)
As a member of a team or group reviews land/fire management planning documents including, land and resource management plan, fire management plans, wildland fire emergency response plans, fire danger operating plans, community wildfire protection plans, and prescribed fire burn plans, to both gain an understanding and to communicate to other firefighters the relationship between guidance documents and the hands-on work of a journey level wildland firefighter.

Reviews local cooperator agreement documents to understand the scope and limitations of wildfire response in their local area.

Attends advanced training in wildland fire, human performance, risk management and natural resource in a residential academy setting.

Participates in local fire and safety training in the techniques, practices, and methods of fire suppression and in the safe, efficient operation and use of tools, equipment and vehicles used in fireline activities. Participates in crew proficiency checks and drills. Participates in safety sessions and fire critiques.

May be assigned to a fire lookout to provide detection and reporting of wildfires. Reports smoke and fire to a dispatcher giving location, estimated size and other pertinent information. Reports weather and fire behavior information keeping the dispatcher and/or other officials informed of current conditions.

After orientation and training may serve in a wildland fire dispatch center communicating weather and resource status, responding to non-emergency radio and telephone calls. Identifies jurisdiction of reported fires and notifies appropriate officials.

Under the guidance of a seasoned wildland firefighter, performs project or other land management work such as road and trail maintenance, habitat manipulation, miscellaneous equipment and facilities maintenance and interpretive work with the public.

Performs other duties as assigned.

FACTORS

Guidelines

A large body of specialized technical firefighting, safety, fire prevention, and fire organization guides exist and must be thoroughly understood and applied. These guides include manuals, handbooks, training aids, maps and charts, and special instructions and practices pertaining to the use of mechanized equipment, aerial techniques, and other procedures related to fire management work. Incumbent will learn and be aware of the guidance, as well as the constantly changing nature of guidelines as new or modified techniques emerge.

At this level, the Apprentice performs work assignments in accordance with established procedures, referring emergency and unusual problems to supervisors. Apprentice Wildland Firefighters at this level exercises more skilled experience when applying procedures and safety protocols to the specific conditions of the assignment.

Complexity

The Apprentice Wildland Firefighter performs wildland firefighting in a variety of assignments as a member of a module or crew. The approach exercised while performing work assignments e varies based upon terrain, fire intensity, fuels availability, wind velocity, smoke, and resource values. Specific tasks, use of tools and methods, and the sequence in which tasks are to be done are determined by evaluation of the situation and issues involved. Consideration must also be

given to slope, weather conditions, fuels and other fire behavior factors while performing wildland fire suppression. Decisions made relate to such matters as: (1) selecting routes and methods to reach fires; (2) deciding if fires can be suppressed without additional help or equipment; (3) determining initial action to be taken to control/manage small fires, including water delivery options; (4) ascertaining the cause of fires; and (5) recommending action.

Personal Contacts/Purpose of Contacts

Contacts include members of the module and crew, including leaders, supervisors, fire management officers, and dispatch; these contacts are to receive and provide instruction, information, and mentorship and to communicate details related to the assignment. Contacts include travelers, campers, visitors, and residents of the area to provide information regarding fire prevention, fire hazards, restricted areas, and routes of travel and to secure cooperation and participation in the fire prevention program. Contacts are to ensure that safety rules, protocols, and procedures are followed. Contacts include sharing skills and knowledge with lower graded firefighters in the operation and maintenance of tools and equipment and in fire management activities.

Supervision Received

The Wildland Firefighter Apprentice at this level work under a supervisor who provides work assignments, instructions, and work schedules. The supervisor periodically checks the readiness of equipment, reviews work performance on fires, and ensures that fire plans, safety rules, and equipment maintenance procedures are being followed. Supervisor furnishes advice, assistance, and helps in determining action to take on hazardous conditions encountered or unusual work problems that occur; however, during emergency or fire situations, the incumbent may be in situations where there's limited opportunity to contact supervisor for help, assistance, or guidance and must use independent judgment.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT FACTS

The duties of this position are so rigorous that employment is limited physically vigorous individual who must meet established maximum age and physical qualification requirements.

Physical Demands: Arduous exertion for protracted periods of time such as, but not limited to, extensive running, walking, climbing, kneeling, stooping, pulling hoses, jumping and twisting, prolonged standing, walking over uneven ground, and recurring bending, reaching, lifting, and carrying of items weighing over 50 pounds and shared lifting and carrying of heavier items, and similar activities requiring at least average agility and dexterity.

Work Environment: Forest, range, and desert environments in steep terrain where surfaces may be extremely uneven, rocky, covered with thick tangled vegetation, smoky conditions, etc. Temperatures commonly exceed 100 degrees F and may fall below freezing. Risks include smoke inhalation, fire entrapment, snake or insect bites and stings, exposure to excessive machinery noise, and falling and rolling material. Employee must adjust and cope with exposure to weather elements, dust and smoke, poor bivouac and eating situations under an unpredictable

set of circumstances. Firefighters may be required to live in backcountry camps for extended periods of time. The hazardous nature of the work requires that personal protective equipment be worn (e.g., boots, hard hat, gloves, flame resistant clothing). Work may require travel by fixed-wing or rotor-wing aircraft.

Incumbent is required to sign the apprentice agreement and adhere to the standards established by the National Interagency Joint Apprentice Agreement.

This is a testing designated position (TDP) under the Department of the Interior Drug-Free Workplace Program.

Incumbent is subject to medical examination and must pass the work capacity test for arduous positions.

Position may require a valid state driver's license to operate light vehicles and 4X4 vehicles.

When this position description is used in helideck, wildland fire module, or hotshot operations, specific qualification requirements apply (e.g., Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations, Standards for Interagency Hotshot Crew Operations, National Wildfire Coordinating Group Guidance).