

So you want to be a Hotshot. Perhaps you should really know what a Hotshot crew does. This statement is prepared for your study and serious consideration to purposely discourage those who might be erroneously informed, or those better equipped both mentally and physically to apply for less demanding, but equally important work with the U. S. Forest Service. And we do have many jobs that pay the same, and are equally challenging, equally rewarding.

The very term "Hotshot" means many things to many people. But to those of us who recruit, train, and work Hotshots, the job title is anything but glamorous. From experience we know that firefighting is 90 percent physical for the Hotshot crews. The nature of the work is demanding. Only those of high strength, agility, coordination, and stamina can cope with the sustained work required of the average Hotshot.

As a Hotshot you will be required to not only produce physically, but to live together, eat together, sleep together in close, crowded conditions. Complete compatibility is in itself a difficult challenge.

You must take orders, and carry those orders out at all times, day after day. The emotional strain is extreme, and the competitive pressure of your peer group is always present. For a crew is only as good as its weakest member.

When not on fire duty, you will be required to engage in daily, structured physical fitness training that consists of a two mile run, coordination exercises, push-ups, sit-ups, chin-ups, rope climbs, squat thrusts, abdominal stretching, and the obstacle courses.

The rest of your day will be like every other day: Hard labor using hand tools (ax, shovel, saw) and usually piling brush, digging holes, picking up garbage, cleaning toilets, sharpening tools, and similar tasks. You will be expected to be ready at all times to answer fire calls on the District, Forest, Region, or out of Region. This requires you to be on a 24 hour alert.

On the fire line the Hotshot crews are singled out for the most hazardous, difficult assignments. It is normal for Hotshot crews to be on the first shift 32 hours before relief is available. Succeeding shifts of 14-18 hours are necessary. You will normally be "spiked" out away from the main fire camp, thirsty, hungry, and sleeping on rocky ground, too often without even paper sleeping bags. You'll hardly have the luxury of washing your hands, much less the facilities to bathe. You'll be filthy, exhausted, underfed, and hurting. There will be no privacy, no sanitation, no shelter, no laundry, no doctors, however first aid is available.

The Hotshot crew is so named because of the need for tough, knowledgeable, hard individuals who can be sent ahead of the main contingent of ordinary labor crews, and independently drive holding lines around critical segments of the fire, hold their line, and survive. You will be required to pack heavy loads up and down extremely mountainous terrain (hose packs of 70 pounds); fell large trees with either power saws or cross-cut saws, buck trees into shorter lengths, haul blocks of logs, dead falls and brush out of the fire path; dig (3 feet to 10 feet wide) fire lines to mineral soil; build retaining walls; haul hose; pack heavy portable pumps and tanks; and burn out your line before the fire gets there; and then start extinguishing spot fires over your lines. And that's not the end of it. The dirty work of mop-up begins: Digging and scraping all hot spots out and extinguishing the heat source. Other features of the job are living in and breathing smoke for days, contending with poison oak, poison ivy, poison sumac, cactus, thorns, ticks, gnats, flies, snakes, scorpions, spiders, rolling rocks, and falling debris. It's dirty, hot, and freezing cold. It's dusty.

Obviously, we're looking for superior individuals to fill our Hotshot crews. If you can live and excel with the job I've described, then we want you. We care not about your sex, color, race or religion; but if for any reason you cannot live up to these standards, then I encourage you to do yourself and the rest of the crew a favor and apply for other than Hotshot work.

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