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Route To:

Subject: Qualification Requirements for Secondary Firefighter Positions

To: Regional Foresters, Station Directors, Area Director, IITF Director, Deputy Chiefs and WO Directors

This memorandum replaces the memorandum of December 20, 2006, with the subject “Qualification Requirements for Firefighter Positions Covered by Secondary (Administrative) Retirement Coverage.” This memo will:

- Reiterate the policy that 90-days of wildland firefighting (WLFF) experience is required for secondary firefighter positions and therefore deemed a selective placement factor; and
- Clarify the definition of Wildland Firefighter (WLFF) requirements for positions designated as secondary firefighter positions.

The Office of Personnel Management’s (OPM) definition of a selective placement factor is a specific qualification that is absolutely required because a person cannot perform in the position without such qualifications. A selective factor becomes part of the minimum requirements for a position, and applicants who do not meet it are ineligible.

The December 20, 2006, memorandum stated that a waiver of the 90-days of WLFF experience could be considered. Such a waiver is inappropriate and contradictory to OPM regulation and the requirements for selective placement factors. Therefore, it is Forest Service (FS) policy that 90-days of WLFF experience as defined below is required for secondary firefighter positions.

Supervisors and managers should do everything possible to ensure individuals who do not now possess the 90-days of WLFF experience and who seek reassignment and/or promotion to other secondary positions are given the opportunity to gain the experience through details and/or other appropriate firefighting assignments.

For those individuals who encumbered secondary positions when this requirement was imposed on December 20, 2006, the 90-day requirement will not apply so long as the employee remains in their current position. However, if these individuals seek reassignment, promotion, or change-to-lower grade to other secondary positions, the 90-days of WLFF experience will apply. As a reminder, all secondary covered positions (including dispatch positions) will be required to meet the 90-day previous WLFF experience requirement.



The definitions and clarifications of WLFF experience are as follows:

WLFF experience includes any non-structure firefighter experience in the wildland. WLFF experience is gained through work on the fire line in containment, control, protection, or management of a wildland fire. This experience can be met by serving in a temporary, seasonal, or equivalent private sector fire position for no less than a total of three months (90-days). Shorter periods of WLFF experience (e.g. militia, non-fire positions, and rural fire departments) can also be credited, as long as the total amount of this experience equates to no less than three months (90-days).

Wildland Fires are categorized into two distinct types:

Wildfire: An unplanned ignition caused by lightning, volcanoes, unauthorized and accidental human-caused actions and escaped prescribed fires. Wildfires may be managed for multiple objectives.

Prescribed Fire: Any fire intentionally ignited by management under an approved plan to meet specific objectives.

The above definitions for WLFF experience are to be used when qualifying applicants for secondary firefighter positions and must also be cited in the vacancy announcements for these positions and documented in the position descriptions.

The requirement of WLFF experience should not be confused with an employee's eligibility for coverage under the enhanced retirement benefit for firefighters. An individual may qualify for (including the 90-days of WLFF experience) a secondary firefighter position and not be eligible for the firefighter retirement. The WLFF experience can be gained at any grade level and series.

The WLFF experience does not substitute for the one year of specialized experience at the next lower grade level for individuals applying for promotion opportunities.

If you have any questions, please contact Cynthia Counts in Human Resources Management, Employment Policy Branch at 505-274-3565 or ccounts@fs.fed.us.

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