You may be asking yourself what it takes to be a wildland fire fighter. Well, I can help you on some of the aspects that it takes for that type of job.

Let’s talk about the different types of crews you can work on. The engine crew is typically based of five personnel but it can go up to 10 people in some circumstances. They spend most their days on their vehicle or a few feet from it. They do a lot of support roles for the other crews. Like sometime running hose legs to supply water to the hand cruise. The funnest time I had on the engines was when we fought the fire by spraying water directly on it

Another type of fire crew that a lot of people don’t know about is the fuels crew. Fuel crew is a stepping stone for those who want to fight fire but don’t how to start. The amount of people who can be on the fuel crew varies on the organization that run it but they can have 21 to 10 people on their crew. Their responsibility is to go and an overgrown forest and reduce the fuel load in the area. The reason they do that is if a fire does hit where they work, either it stops or slow down.

Hand crews are typically one of two crews that people think of when they think of wildland fire fighting. Hand crew are made up of 21 people. There are a lot of types of hand crews. There’s type 2, type 2 IA, type 1 or hot shots. The type 2 crew is the crew the has the lowest mount of qualification. The type 2 IA means that there is an initial attack. They have a little more qualification and the guys have more experience. A hotshot crew will be the more experience of the firefighter. Hotshot are required to have experience: 80% of the crew members on a hotshot crew have at least one year of experience. While the requirement for a Type 2 IA crew is only 60%.

Helitack crews provide land managers with a safe, highly skilled, and productive aerial firefighting resource. Crew members are specially trained in the tactical and logistical use of helicopters for fire suppression. These crews are a primary initial attack resource transported to wildfires by helicopter.

Smokejumpers are specially trained wildland firefighters who provide an initial attack response on remote wildland fires. They are inserted at the site of the fire by parachute. In addition to performing the initial attack on wildfires, they may also provide leadership for extended attacks on wildland fires.

Wildland is a very physical job that takes well disciplined person to maintain their physicality throughout the year. You may think that you will show up to your first day on the job and start your physical training, but that is the wrong idea. That’s is because wildland firefighting is a seasonal job and by the you start working in the spring the fire season is starting up. You rely way too much on your physical ability to save your life. You’re expected to carry a minimum of 45 pounds worth of essential equipment and I will talk more about the equipment later on. But that 45-pound backpack that you’re caring is on you 16 hours a day and you’re going up and down steep terrain.

Wildland firefighters can work 14 days straight (called a roll) with 16-hour days and possibly up to three days travel before and after the official 14. Night shifts and longer shifts of 16-24 hours are possible depending on the fire and area you are in, but not super common. My record is 29 hours straight.

Because almost all wildland firefighters need to sleep either in fire camps or in spike camps, they sleep in tents, on the ground, and in hot, smoky, and dusty conditions. Shift work interferes with sleep, especially for those on night shift.

You will meet a lot of people and some of them will become good friends maybe even best friends. But sometimes you will find somebody you don’t like. That’s when you’ll learn a life lesson how to work with people you don’t get along with. Because you’re going to be in close quarters with your crew and that depends on what type of crew, you’re on.

A lot of the time you will find that you will meet people around the same age and they have the same work ethics as you to. They are willing to get the job done however physically hard it is and willing to help you to accomplish it. A lot of the time they are joking and laughing when they are doing it making the experience of the hard time enjoyable and the best memories that you’re correct.

Then there are times when you meet somebody that you cannot stand. Spending 16 a day for 14 days and 6 mouths with that person will make it hard on you. But you just gotta learn how to deal with the job at hand and try to get through your differences.

While some wildland firefighters work year-round and some work only during the fire season, the work is always strenuous and positions are always highly competitive.