

Forestry Technician

The person who actually does the work in the woods: cruising timber, planting, thinning, and often fighting fire.

TYPICAL PAY

\$54,560

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$40k to \$84k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

up to 2 years

after high school

DEMAND

Limited

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

National forests, state land, tree farms, conservation districts, fire...

How you get there

- 1 Finish high school** Grade 12
Get a driver's license and get fit. Crew work is walking steep ground carrying weight, all day.
- 2 Apply for a seasonal crew job** Apply 6 to 9 months ahead
Federal openings are posted on USAJOBS (the federal government hiring site), usually in the fall for the following summer. State forestry agencies and conservation corps hire too.
- 3 Take the basic training** First 2 to 4 weeks
Your first weeks are courses and a work capacity test. Fire crews add a pack test: three miles carrying 45 pounds inside 45 minutes.
- 4 Two-year forest technology degree, optional** 2 years
An associate degree makes you competitive for permanent positions and for the higher federal grades. Many people do it between seasons.
- 5 Get a permanent appointment** Year 3 to year 6
This usually takes two to five seasons of good evaluations and being willing to move for the opening. It is the real finish line.

Pros and cons

- + You can start the summer after high school with no debt
- + Outdoors, physical, in country most people never see
- + Overtime and hazard pay stack up fast in a busy season
- Most jobs start seasonal, so winters can mean no income
- The occupation is shrinking, so permanent slots are fought over
- Smoke, heat, poison oak, ticks and long shifts wear people down

Optional boosts

Sawyer certification. Wildland fire positions. Emergency medical technician. CDL (commercial driver's license).

Good to know

The job title hides a firefighter

For most of the last fifty years, the federal government hired wildland firefighters under the job title forestry technician. Crews spent whole careers fighting fire with a title that sounded like an office job, which i...

The pack test is the gate

To take a fire assignment you have to pass an arduous work capacity test: walk three miles carrying a 45 pound vest in 45 minutes or less. No running allowed. People train for months for it and some still fail o...

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Forest and Conservation Technicians (19-4071.00)
US Forest Service careers, United States Department of Agriculture
USAJOBS, the federal government hiring site
State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in United States dollars, based on Bureau of Labor Statistics wage data and published pay scales. They vary by state, employer and experience. Tuition is for in-state students at public schools unless the card says otherwise. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/us/careers/forestry-technician>



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