

Boots in the Forest

IDAHO CITY HOTSHOTS SUPERINTENDENT



Hi, I'm Brian Cardoza, the Idaho City Hotshots Superintendent on the Idaho City Ranger District of the Boise National Forest. I manage a 20-person Type 1 fire crew that responds to wildfires nationwide.

Where were you when this photo was taken?

I was out on assignment on the Springs Fire in 2012. The fire, which started August 5th, was located on the Boise National Forest near Garden Valley, Idaho.

What training or education do you need for this job?

If you're thinking about applying to be a hotshot, I recommend visiting as many crews as possible during the winter. Find a crew that you feel like you would fit in with—you're going to be spending A LOT of time together during fire season. A basic one-week course is needed to become a wildland firefighter. Most forests will offer this class at the beginning of the season for new employees. However, the biggest preparations for becoming a hotshot aren't education-based. You have to be mentally and physically prepared for a season of hard work and time spent away from your family.

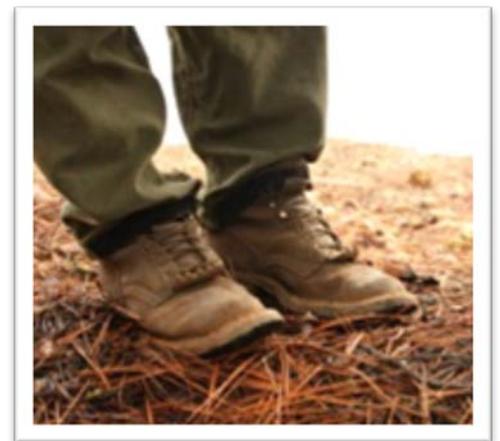
"As a hotshot, it's a very rewarding job. We have a clear objective from fire management. We work hard to achieve it, and when we do, it's a great reward for the guys."

What is a typical day for you?

There are two typical days for us—one when we're on a fire, one when we're not. If we're on an incident, I typically wake up early and head to briefing, where I receive the day's objectives from division. I take my crew out to the fire and we spend the day cutting line or burning out. When we're not on a fire, we'll spend the morning doing physical training—usually a run or a hike. After that we'll spend the remainder of the day doing project work, which is generally thinning or constructing trails, or sometimes a training exercise.

What kind of footwear do you typically wear?

I wear wildland firefighting boots, heavy leather boots that can withstand a certain amount of heat and are built for hiking in difficult terrain. The Forest Service requires that wildland firefighters' boots must be at least eight inches up the calf.



Hotshots spend many long days hiking and working in their boots.

What do you like most about your job?

One of the best parts about this job is the cadre and comradeship among the crew. As we go through critical training at the beginning of the season, it's great to see the crew start to gel and work together.

If you had to pick another occupation, what would it be?

If I wasn't a hotshot superintendent, I would be a fire management officer or a game warden for the Forest Service.

[Read more](#)



To learn more about what it's like to be a wildland firefighter, check out this video: [The Heart of a Firefighter](#).

WHAT ARE HOTSHOTS?

Hotshot crews started in Southern California in the late 1940s on the Cleveland and Angeles National Forests. The name was in reference to being in the hottest part of fires. Their specialty is wildfire suppression, but they are sometimes assigned other jobs, including search and rescue and disaster response assistance. The 20-member crews are often called Type 1 Crews but they exceed the experience, training and physical fitness required for a Type 1 Crew.

Hotshots must be available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week during the fire season, which typically last six months. To get to remote fire sites, crews either hike or are flown in by helicopter. Hotshots pack all the water and supplies needed for work shifts that frequently exceed 8 hours, and may be 12 hours or longer.

For more history and information about individual crews, see the [“Hotshot Crew History in America”](#)



Idaho City Hotshots on the fire line.