

Official statement:

The USDA Forest Service wildland firefighters are incredibly proficient in emergency response and work in close coordination with other federal, state, local, and tribal partners on incidents.

With fire seasons turning into fire years, it is imperative to have a year-round workforce that is available to respond at any time, that is supported and equitably compensated, has a better work-life balance, and is available to undertake preventive actions like hazardous fuels management treatments during periods of low fire activity.

The Forest Service welcomed the [news](#) shared at the White House, and we look forward to working with our leadership to provide much needed assistance to the firefighting community in the coming months and years. The starting salary of an entry level GS-3 firefighter is 13.45, with some possibilities of cost of living locality pay. The Federal Government pay tables are available on the Office of Personnel Management at:

<https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/salaries-wages/2021/general-schedule/>. Depending on the position of the firefighter, salaries vary from a GS-3 to GS-9 (\$28,078 - \$69,462 annually).

Good afternoon, Nova. Thank you for reaching out to us. Below is a bit of info for you on background.

Some locations, such as California, have seen staffing struggles. Maintaining our ability to hire and retain firefighters as we see the complexity of the firefighting environment grow exponentially, has been further complicated by our inability to offer competitive wages. Federal wages for firefighters have not kept pace with wages offered by state, local and private entities in some areas of the United States. We have seen key highly trained personnel leave the Forest Service and we have also experienced some inability to recruit new employees into the agency, which we understand is due to wage disparities with the states.

We are committed to ensuring that Federal firefighters are properly compensated and recognized for the work they do and the administration is focused on equity in all forms. This is not about minimum wage but about a competitive wage. Particularly in states like California we are seeing that federal wages for firefighters is about half of what they would get for similar jobs in state and private entities. For us to remain competitive we need to create a structure for establishing a wage that creates greater parity. This would enable us to maintain the necessary firefighting workforce necessary to meet wildland fire response expectations. We are working with OPM and OMB to evaluate options to modernize the firefighting workforce compensation structure, including job series, pay grade levels, and other changes.

Best,

Chad Douglas
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Caring for the land and serving people

**[70-PERCENT PAY RAISE CALCULATION COMES FROM THE FOLLOWING
STATEMENT FROM FOREST SERVICE]:**

Good morning,

Thanks for your interest in the USDA Forest Service.

The Forest Service does not manage the federal pay tables, these are managed by Office of Personnel Management.

The Federal Government pay tables are available on the OPM website
at: <https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.opm.gov%2Fpolicy-data-oversight%2Fpay-leave%2Fsalaries-wages%2F2021%2Fgeneral-schedule%2F&data=04%7C01%7C%7C7d9ad63fd03744ee7b1808d94220216d%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C637613528024447161%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Iik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=%2FId6lEWPSKiwhgWqBVkNP%2FOI3Ta3DXb8ol2t1dde5%2Fs%3D&reserved=0>

Depending on the position of the firefighter, salaries vary from a GS-3 to GS-9 (\$28,078 - \$69,462 annually). Employees are also eligible for a hazardous duty differential at 25% of their base pay when fighting a fire.

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