



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Elect-In Process for the Wildland Fire Management Occupational Series, GS-0456

November 1, 2023

In 2022, a new occupational series was created for federal wildland firefighters, as directed by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. For the first time in 50 years, the Wildland Fire Management Series, GS-0456, defines wildland firefighters' unique duties and provides clear career advancement details. This effort builds on the Interior and Agriculture departments' commitment to make historic federal wildland firefighting workforce improvements through increased compensation, more year-round capacity, additional affordable housing options, improved work-life balance, and mental and physical health resources.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law requires opportunities for federal wildland firefighters to elect into the new series. These frequently asked questions address the elect-in process.

If you have additional questions after reading this document, please contact your Servicing Human Resources Office (SHRO).

Wildland Fire Management Occupational Series Elect-in Process

About the New Series

1. What is the new GS-0456 Wildland Fire Management series?

Historically, many federal jobs with a variety of associated roles and responsibilities, including wildland firefighting, were incorporated into multiple, broad occupational series. These include the GS-0301 Miscellaneous Administration and Program series, GS-0401 Natural Resources Management and Biological Sciences series, GS-0455 Range Technician series, and the GS-0462 Forestry Technician series. As wildland fire management evolved over several decades, Interior and its partners identified a need for a specific wildland fire management series as part of a broad wildland fire management workforce transformation effort.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law required the occupational series to cover positions for which the primary duties involve the prevention, control, suppression, or management of wildland fires. In response, and following consultation with the Interior and Agriculture departments, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) created the GS-0456 Wildland Fire Management series, which

identifies occupational titles, specialties, and a clear career advancement path that reflects the true nature of wildland fire management work.

The new series is a part of a long-term solution to ensure federal wildland firefighters are supported, equitably compensated, have clear career paths, and have better work-life balance.

2. Who will be eligible to elect into the new GS-0456 Wildland Fire Management series?

Federal wildland firefighters, defined as federal employees covered by the General Schedule Classification System under Title 5, United States Code, Chapter 51, performing wildland firefighting work may elect into the new series.

3. What are the benefits of moving into the new GS-0456 Wildland Fire Management series?

For the first time in over 50 years, the new series identifies, defines, and provides for wildland firefighters' unique duties and responsibilities. It establishes occupational titles, specialties, and a clear career advancement path that reflects the true nature of wildland fire management work. Additionally, the new series classification processes are more consistent between the Interior and Agriculture departments. This will foster more standardized career trajectories and specified occupational paths throughout all federal wildland fire management programs.

4. Which positions will be included in the GS-0456 Wildland Fire Management series?

To determine the series in which to classify positions, agencies must consider many things, including the knowledge required by the position, the reason for the position's existence, the organizational mission and function, and recruitment sources. Any positions requiring specialized knowledge of firefighting techniques, equipment, and procedures to prevent and manage wildfires will be included in the new series.

5. I'm currently in a position that is eligible to elect into the GS-0456 Wildland Fire Management series. Am I required to move into the new series?

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law states that current eligible employees who meet the new occupational series criteria may elect to move into the new series, or they may elect to remain in their current series. The choice is yours.

6. Will switching to the GS-0456 Wildland Fire Management series impact my pay?

Currently, Congress has not enacted legislation to change federal pay tables. The President's 2024 budget proposal includes the creation of a special wildland firefighter special base pay table, which would apply to:

- 1) Employees that are covered under the special retirement provisions for firefighters, or

- 2) Employees who occupy secondary firefighter positions, but are not paying into the special retirement system because they didn't meet retirement coverage requirements, or
- 3) Temporary or intermittent employees in the above categories who are otherwise ineligible for retirement benefits.

7. I'm currently receiving the temporary supplemental payments as part of section 40803 of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (\$20,000 per year or 50 percent of base salary). If I remain in my current series, will I still be eligible to receive the temporary supplements?

Yes, you will continue to receive the temporary supplemental payments whether you decide to elect into the new series or not. Of course, this is contingent on you continuing to meet payment eligibility requirements, along with Congress continuing to authorize and enact the supplemental payments.

8. I am a temporary-seasonal (GS-1039) who is eligible for re-hire. If I was originally hired as a GS-0462 Forestry Technician, am I eligible to be re-hired into the GS-0456 Wildland Fire Management series?

As a temporary-seasonal, you will be automatically re-hired into the new series when you begin your next season (5 CFR 316.402(b)(7)).

9. I am a current employee in a wildland management position (not a GS-0456 position). Will I need to reapply for my job?

No, you do not have to competitively reapply to remain in your current position. Similarly, if you elect into the new series, you do not need to reapply.

10. I would like to remain in my current series. Will this affect my ability to apply and be considered for other jobs across the federal wildland fire agencies?

Remaining in your current occupational series will not affect your ability to apply for future wildland fire positions in the GS-0456 series.

11. Will all wildland fire positions eventually be converted to the GS-0456 Wildland Fire Management series?

The Interior and Agriculture departments are working to recruit and staff GS-0456 series positions. When a non-GS-0456 position (such as a GS-0462 Forestry Technician position) becomes vacant,

agencies will fill the vacancy as a GS-0456 position, phasing out the use of other series over time. Employees who elect to remain in their current series will not see their positions change.

Making an Election

12. What is the elect-in process, and who is impacted?

The elect-in process will be completed electronically using the Wildland Fire Management Series, 0456 Elect-In Form.

Federal wildland firefighters, and anyone interested in applying for such positions, are impacted. Current firefighters—defined as federal employees covered by the General Schedule Classification System under Title 5, United States Code Chapter 51, performing wildland firefighting work—will have the opportunity to elect into the new series. Prospective employees can apply for jobs under the new series and be specifically designated as wildland firefighters.

13. What do I need to do to move into the GS-0456 Wildland Fire Management series?

Eligible employees will receive an email notification with instructions and a link to the elect-in site. If you do not have a government email, you should contact your SHRO for assistance. The form may be completed on any device (including a mobile device) that is connected to the Interior network.

14. What are the elect-in deadlines?

The elect-in process will begin in the fall of 2023, following two town halls and the release of these FAQs to the Interior wildland fire workforce. The elect-in process will be open and available through June 30, 2024.

If as an eligible employee, regardless of tenure (e.g., permanent or temporary-seasonal), you wish to elect into the new series after June 30, 2024, you will need to contact your local SHRO for instructions.

15. How quickly will the change take effect and how will I know my election is in process?

If you choose to elect into the new series, it will take the servicing SHRO approximately 2-3 weeks to process the action. You will receive confirmation through a SF-50 Notification of Personnel Action Form indicating a reassignment action and the Wildland Fire Management Series, 0456 Elect-In form will be uploaded into your Electronic Official Personnel Folder (eOPF).

16. What if I choose not to elect in?

If you decide to remain in your current occupational series, there will be no change to your title. Employees who want to remain in their current series should complete the Wildland Fire

Management Series, 0456 Elect-In Form. If you apply for a different wildland fire position in the future, your occupational series will likely change to the GS-0456 series.

17. The position description (PD) I am currently in doesn't seem to be an option on the FLERT website to elect into the new 0456 series, and it seems like a standard PD has not been finished for my position. What are my options?

HR and wildland fire subject matter experts have been diligently working to create standard PDs for months. While standard PDs may be available for much of the wildland fire management workforce, if you do not see your PD listed, please contact your SHRO for its status and more information.

18. I originally decided to not elect into the GS-0456 Wildland Fire Management series and have already submitted my form. I have changed my mind and now want to elect in. What are my options?

Please contact your SHRO. They can assist with resetting your form and your election into the GS-0456 series.