



WHAT THEY CARRY

A firefighter has to bring the right tools to a brush or forest fire—and wear gear that helps her stay safe on the job. Here's some essential equipment.

HELMET

Heat-resistant plastic protects the head from hard objects.

SAFETY GLASSES

Keep smoke and debris away from eyes

FIRE-RESISTANT CLOTHING

Fabrics like polyester easily catch fire and melt. But a firefighter's clothing is treated with flame-resistant chemicals that make it much less likely to ignite.

EMERGENCY SHELTER

A small flame-resistant tent can provide safe cover for a firefighter surrounded by fire.

RADIO AND GPS

Firefighters need to communicate with one another and track their location during a wildfire.

FLAME-RESISTANT GLOVES

Hand protection

FIRE RAKE OR HOE

Helps clear leaves and grass to create a dirt line

DRIP TORCH

For lighting controlled fires or burning brush to stop advancing fires

BOOTS

Thick soles and steel toes keep feet out of harm's way.





Wildland firefighters carry gear weighing up to 45 pounds over long distances. Their job sometimes requires setting controlled fires.



WOMEN AND FIREFIGHTING: A GOOD FIT

Jessica Gardetto is a firefighter. Her father was, too. “I grew up with my dad coming home smelling like wildfire and covered in soot,” she says. To her, it seemed like a meaningful job that could help pay for college. When she started battling forest fires, she was one of only a few women in a crew with a hundred or more men. She was always treated with respect, but she faced challenges. For example, all of the equipment she had to wear and use was designed for men.

“Women’s bodies are different,” she says. It’s hard enough for a man or woman to carry 45 pounds of water, food, tools, and other equipment in a pack. When the straps don’t fit right, that weight is even more uncomfortable. So she’s happy that agencies are finally designing clothing and packs to better fit female firefighters.

She’s also a big fan of mentoring programs that pair women interested in firefighting with women who have already found success in the career. If you’re a girl (or you know one) who wants to be a firefighter, she says go for it! “It’s a job women can do, and they can do it well!”

—Kathryn Hulick

