

Aerial Firefighters

MISSION

The Air Force Reserve Aerial Firefighters are an elite force of approximately one hundred. What makes them so unusual is that they are not called out by the Department of Defense but by the U.S. Forestry Service because this is a non-military mission.



Violent wildfires seasonally plague the United States, particularly in the West, sometimes endangering people and property. If these fires grow too large to be handled by local authorities, resources are marshaled through the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC), based in Boise, Idaho. Through this agency, additional civilian forces are called upon to fight the fire, but when large scale aerial drops are necessary, the NIFC asks the U.S. Forestry Service to call in the Air Force Reserve Aerial Firefighters, based at Peterson Air Force Base in Colorado.

The Aerial Firefighters, a subset of the Air Mobility Mission, fly C-130s specially equipped to dispense flame retarding chemicals. Staff from the Forestry Service prepare and load the chemicals. Then the C-130, with a crew consisting of a pilot, copilot, navigator, flight engineer and two loadmasters, is led by a small Forestry Service plane to the drop area. This process, sometimes called surge fire fighter capability, is repeated until the fire is under control. Although no Aerial Firefighters ever touch the ground, they fly very close to it – sometimes as close as 2000 feet.

Benefits

In the Air Force Reserve, you are entitled to a wide range of benefits, similar to those on Active Duty.

- Earn a paycheck – The pay is competitive for part-time and some full-time jobs.
- Get an education – The Air Force Reserve encourages continuing education and offers several programs – Non-contributory Montgomery G.I. Bill, Tuition Assistance, free credits through the Community College of the Air Force (CCAF), and specialized training that can lead to certifications and licenses. There can also be bonuses and incentives for those going into critically needed areas.
- Low-cost health care plan – This new program applies to both the Reservist and immediate family and can significantly reduce the cost of medical care.
- Retirement plan – Military retirement programs are very generous. If you have previously served, your time counts toward your retirement in the Air Force Reserve.
- Commissary and BX Privileges – Military bases offer discounted and tax-free supermarket and department store shopping plus low-cost recreational vehicle rentals.
- Live and serve at home – Serve where you live and transfer to a new location only at your request.
- Maintain rank – If you have previously served in the Air Force or any other branch of the military, chances are you will retain your rank when you join the Air Force Reserve.
- Do the extraordinary – This is an opportunity to meet American heroes accomplishing amazing feats and to become one with them.

Qualifications

Only a few candidates are accepted for this mission each year. These are Reservists who are top performers and who have expressed a special interest in Aerial Firefighting. All members of the Aerial Firefighters must be certified to be an Airborne Firefighter by the Forestry Service.

The Air Force Reserve is an integral part of the United States Air Force, performing approximately 20 percent of the work. In the case of Aerial Firefighting, 100 percent of the work is performed by Reservists.

Members of the Air Force Reserve can live and serve in their local communities. Although there are full-time opportunities, those in the Air Force Reserve can continue their full-time civilian careers. This is a great way to serve your country and still live at home with your family.



AIR FORCE RESERVE

To learn more, call 800-257-1212 or log on to AFReserve.com