

## Forest Service Hire Tips and Tricks

Disclosure: These tips and tricks is what I have experience over the past few years

Tips:

- ❖ Use the time that is given to you. If you have 30 minutes, aim for 20 – 25 minutes interview. In most cases the lead interviewer will tell you how many questions they will ask. Figure out how much time to spend. If they don't tell you, perfectly acceptable to ask how many questions
- ❖ Answer questions thoroughly and factually. Do a practice interview either with a co-worker or in front of a mirror. Time yourself. In most cases, candidates being interviewed don't say near enough. It is not uncommon for an employee to answer all 5 questions in less than 3 minutes. That is a doing a giant disservice to you. You need to sell yourself...
- ❖ Don't worry about being nervous. 95% of people are nervous. No points deducted.
- ❖ With the above being said, this is the opportunity for you to showcase your skills. Often there are two or three top candidates and the interview is the difference between getting the job or not. 30 minutes of your life should be set aside for you to shine. Be prepared. For me personally, the interview is the key component to getting to know a potential employee and what they have to offer the agency.
- ❖ Dress appropriately. Business casual at a minimum. Uniform or a button down shirt and tie are nice touches.
- ❖ For interviews, at a minimum there will be 3 FS employees that will be interviewing you. Be prepared for more if you have applied for more than one duty location.
- ❖ Don't freak out if there is a long pause after you answer a question. For phone interviews this can be weird. Remember, part of the process is that the folks doing the interview are writing down your responses. I guarantee you can talk faster than any of us can write. So no, we are not trying to get you to say more.
- ❖ If you don't understand a question, just ask for it to be repeated.
- ❖ Using real life examples are VERY good. One, it sheds a light on who you are. Two, you will find that it will help relax you when you are talking about something familiar.
- ❖ Write down typical responses to questions BEFORE the interview. At best you can draw from it during the interview, at worst a safety blanket for when your mind goes blank. We are not interviewing you on your public speaking ability, so no worries if you have to casually look at notes. Just don't read from a script. Interviews are supposed to be like a conversation, not an exercise in reading.

### Typical Questions:

- ❖ “What are some of your strengths?” As a rule of thumb, anything about mad communication or leadership skills is a breath of fresh air. Work ethic, community involvement, being a great parent or special skills are great.
- ❖ “What are some of your weaknesses?” Trust me, we all have some kind of weakness, don’t EVER say “I don’t have a weakness!”. Ever. Public speaking, balancing work and life, being a perfectionist are all safe answers. Cleaning your room, cussing a lot or having a volcanic temper, best to stay away from.
- ❖ “What is something you are most proud of in your current position?” Once again, we will be looking at something that will set you apart from the rest of the pack. Have anything that made your module more efficient? Teambuilding, improving communication, safety, community engagement, learning new skill, reaching a long-term goal, outreaching youth. All good.
- ❖ “How do you resolve conflict?” The question may ask you to give an example. This is typical especially in leadership positions that are often heavy with conflict. Things that are looked for: How you tackle this issue, what type of communication skills do you display, do you handle on your own or seek assistance?
- ❖ “How have you improved safety within the agency?” With Life First being so paramount and the Chiefs desire for everyone to come home each day, what you do regarding safety is huge.
- ❖ “How have you improved a diverse inclusive environment?” Typically GS 8s and 9s will get questions such as this. It is best if you think about an answer for this type of question before you are surprised. Outreaching to high quality employees, diverse candidates or treating everyone fairly are safe. Other possible answers is partaking in team teaching events, fairs, parades or other community engagement activities with the goal of exposing potential candidates to a career in the Forest Service. In leadership positions, there is an expectation to promote this in the agency, don’t get tripped up!