



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Not Your Ordinary Job – Episode One Transcript

- Jasmine:** Hello, everyone, welcome to the Bureau of Land Management Eastern States brand new podcast, Not Your Ordinary Job. I'm your cohost, Jasmine.
- Ashley:** Hello, everybody. I'm Ashley.
- Jasmine:** Each week we will interview one member of the Jackson Hotshots Interagency Fire Crew about their career in fire. Today, we will interview Jackson Hotshot crew member, Nicole Allen. We also encourage you to head over to NIFC.gov for the latest fire news every weekday.
- Ashley:** The Jackson Hotshots Interagency Fire Crew was formed in 1997 and has since been the only fire crew based in the east of the Mississippi River. The fire crew has been called to respond to numerous national emergencies including the September 11, 2001 attacks and recovery operations for the February 1, 2003, Space Shuttle Columbia crash. The Jackson Hotshots were also involved and available for recovery efforts to the 2005 Hurricane Katrina devastations in New Orleans, Louisiana, and in the 2005 Hurricane Rita devastation in the Gulf of Mexico. The Jackson Hotshots continue to develop response plans towards natural and wildlife disasters, including scheduled prescribed burns to restore affected areas. We are very excited to be able to interview the current Jackson Hotshots fire crew.
- But without further ado, we would love to welcome Nicole Allen on the show.
- How are you?
- Nicole:** I'm great. Thank you. How are you?
- Jasmine:** We're doing well. Thank you. And we're so happy that you were able to join us for this interview. It's such a great career to get into. Our first question would definitely have to be what made you get into the career of fire?
- Nicole:** Yeah, so I had started out doing AmeriCorps and then moved on to Conservation Corps work. And I was kind of getting towards the end of my time within the Conservation Corps stuff and was looking for the next thing. And I had quite a few friends who had gone into fire and (it) sounded pretty cool. So I was like, let's give it a chance. And that's, that's kind of how it happened.
- Ashley:** That's great. And how long have you been in the fire career?
- Nicole:** This is my first season.
- Jasmine:** That's awesome. What are the biggest challenges that are faced when working in the career of fire?

Nicole: Obviously, it's a super physical job. And, but also, just being immersed in your job is your life basically. So we're just immersed in it for the duration of the season. Luckily, we have a really good crew. So it's not the worst thing.

Ashley: Yes, and as you were saying it's basically your life. So to have a crew that's very helpful should be the most important part of it.

So what would you say until this season would be your favorite part working in fire?

Nicole: Definitely the crew aspect. That is what motivated me to get into fire in the first place was I had been missing being a part of a crew. So being back on a crew again, specifically this crew, is it my favorite part. Our crew, is really great. The people are pretty much the best. So it's really fun.

Jasmine: That's great. Yeah. That's all a part of getting the job done is working with a great crew, I'm sure huh?

Nicole: Absolutely, and everybody just pushes each other to be better continuously. No matter what it is. Whether it's you know, when you're out there, working pushing yourself to do the extra task or doing PT, or even just hanging out just constantly pushing to be better.

Jasmine: Definitely. So speaking of pushing to become better. Do you have any goals that you've accomplished in the career of fire? Or are there any goals that you would like to still accomplish?

Nicole: Yeah, so just getting onto the crew was a really cool accomplishment. This is my first season in fire so landing a spot on a Hotshot crew was like, oh my gosh, pretty awesome. I'm kind of taking it day by day even though. Every day I'm learning something new. So you know, I hope to continue getting more experience and just learning new things. Every day, every day I get to learn something new. So there's no shortage there of growth.

Ashley: You would say that there's always a success story behind each career. So being in fire and being a woman, what would you say would be your success story there?

Nicole: All of the women that came before me who like, kind of set the stage and have made it but also our whole crew. There's no men versus women or anything like that on our crew. It's everybody's just like here (together). Everybody that came before me, I'm super grateful (for).

Jasmine: So everybody gets treated the same way, right?

Nicole: Absolutely. It's, you're treated based on your abilities and, like we have really great people on our crew regardless of like, gender or any differences. And everybody is treated based on what they show up with and it's really great.

Jasmine: That's awesome. So what do you feel are the biggest misconceptions from the general public about fire?

Nicole: I think a lot of people don't know what wildland fire is. They think fire is just running into burning buildings and exactly rescuing people. But yeah, it's really hard to explain when you're like, no, we dig in the dirt and we sit out in the sun all day. And sometimes we see flames. But I think people just have no idea really what it's really like.

- Jasmine:** Definitely I honestly feel like a lot of people don't really realize that some fire is actually good fire like, for instance when you're doing prescribed burns for the public lands and just to prevent wildfires like that. Once I really found that out, I thought that was pretty awesome.
- Ashley:** As you transition to now learning more and being more on the team, what would you say it takes to be a great team member?
- Nicole:** I think you have to always say, it's the crew before you. So you have to be looking out for the other people and your actions directly affect the actions of other 20 other people. And whether it's something as serious as what you're doing out there on the fire line or whether it's something that you're doing when you're sitting in the buggy and like your windows aren't closed. Everything, every action affects every other person on the crew. So it's just staying vigilant about what you're doing. Especially right now during the COVID times. We're constantly thinking about each other. So just investing yourself into crew is the best investment that you can make if you want to get into fire. if you're showing investment in the crew, then the crew will invest in you.
- Jasmine:** We want to thank you for allowing us to interview you. And, you know, it's always great to interview people who are, you know, in the position to not only help communities but to inspire.
- Ashley:** And also in the frontline during these times. I know we have a very transitioning world, but you guys keep it going as if it was the normal world. So we would like to really thank you for that.
- Nicole:** Thank you so much for having me. I'm grateful for the opportunity to talk about my experience.
- Ashley:** Listen to our podcast every Friday to learn more about our Jackson Hotshots.