



Not Your Ordinary Job – Season Two, Episode Two Transcript

- Ashley:** Welcome, everybody to Not Your Ordinary Job Season Two Podcast. I am Ashley Muriel, Public Affairs Specialist for Eastern States. And with me is...
- Jasmine:** Jasmine Brown, Public Affairs Specialist with BLM Eastern States.
- Ashley:** And today we'll be interviewing Jamie Schnick, Assistant Superintendent [to the Jackson Hotshots]. Welcome! Thank you for being with us today, Jamie.
- Jamie:** It's good to be here.
- Ashley:** So, to get started, who is Jamie Schnick? Tell us a little bit about yourself. How has your career in fire been?
- Jamie:** So, I grew up in Oregon. And, attending the University of Oregon in 2000 some friends of mine were like, "Wouldn't it be great to just go camp out in the woods all summer and fight fire? Wouldn't that be fun?" And I was like, "I don't want to go die in a fire. Like what would my mom think if I went to go fight fire in the woods?"
- You know, one thing led to another I took the classes and they called me. I went and ran around the woods with my fire pack and five gallons of water on my back to spray. And I was like, you know, that was kind of fun. It was cool. And then that fall, the company called me to go burn a clear cut unit for Roseburg Forestry. And I live I want to say like 30 to 40 dozer piles are like 60 foot wide by probably about 30 feet tall. So, at the end of that day, it was dark, you're driving off from the unit. And I looked up on the hillside and there was a couple 300 giant bonfires on the hillside. That's kind of when I realized, you know, I always had an inner pyro. And this was something that I wanted to do. This was really fun. My first like the fire season part of it that first season wasn't super exciting, because most of it was mop-up because we were tied to crew. But once I got a drip torch on my hand and started lighting stuff on fire, and running around the woods, that's kind of what got me hooked on it.
- Ashley:** That's amazing. And could you explain to us a little bit about Type Two fire? What was that term?
- Jamie:** So, a Type Two fire crew are usually utilized after the main fire front comes through, to mop up, and just make sure that the edge is tucked in. Whereas you're Type Two A crews are going to be a little bit farther forward, where the fire is more active. And then your Type One your Hotshot crews, we're gonna be out front, engaging in the active fire, or in difficult terrain that other folks can't access as well.
- Jasmine:** What makes you excited about this year's fire season?
- Jamie:** Well, this year's fire season is gonna be my 20th year in fire, which is pretty exciting. I think that we're going to re-cert for our Type One status. Also, this fire season, Jackson Hotshots have got

everybody in place as far as overhead is concerned. And I think we have a really good solid team put together that we're going to be able to go forth and do great things.

Ashley: So, what is the importance of the people who go outdoors, following the guidelines and the rules suggested from the leads?

Jamie: I mean, I guess the way that I look at it is going out in the woods or in the wilderness is just like flying blind. You have to have the skills and the tools necessary to be able to do that and have confidence. There's definitely plenty of people that have gone out in the woods for a hike and not really pay attention to what they're doing. And then three days later, or three hours later, they don't know where they are and end up having to get rescued. Not all of those folks make it out. You really have to be orientated and know where you're going, and how to get back.

Jasmine: For anybody that's looking to get into the career fire or joining the Jackson Hotshots, what advice would you give them?

Jamie: If you want to work hard, harder than you've ever worked before, then this is something that, that you might want to do. Folks that haven't, I guess, done intense sports, or intense physical labor, this really isn't the way to get your feet wet. You don't want to start on a Hotshot crew without having some previous experience, either working trails, or landscaping, or just in general, being outside and sleeping in the dirt.

Jasmine: Absolutely, it seems like a lot of hard work. What's the best part of working with a diverse group of team members?

Jamie: A lot of folks throw the word camaraderie around, I just, I think you become a family, you get to learn so much from other people, from their life experiences outside of fire, their experiences inside of fire, and just their backgrounds, that it really opens up your mind and your perspective to the rest of the world, I've fought fire with folks from different countries [and] from all over this country. And it just makes you a more well-rounded individual.

Ashley: That is true. And I want to talk a little bit about the pandemic, I know that it has touched everybody on different personal levels. We know that in the team, they've been able to manage support groups, handling what the situation. But globally, we hear and we listen, people say that they took the year to be more relaxed to start doing hobbies that they weren't able to do because of the fast track pace of their work. But firefighters didn't really get that opportunity to do that they had to stay working. How have you been able to develop your personal development, such as education or hobbies, and still manage to reach your career goals?

Jamie: My career goal every day is to get everybody back to the truck safe, to make sure that they're we're all okay and are able to get back to our families at the end of the fire season. So, you know, I think that as far as COVID was concerned, we had one of our busier years, since I've come to the crew in 2018, just due to the fact that we started before anybody else. And so, we were the first Hotshot crew that was dispatched to a fire in the country last year. We paved the way, you know, with our SOPs regarding COVID, set the path forward for the rest of the fire crews in the country. I think, as far as hobbies are concerned, I mean, I'm still able to go hike, and skateboard and do the things that I like to do work around the house, landscape, and garden.

Ashley: And I hear about your educational developments, allowing you to reach different levels in your career. Tell me a little bit more about that.

Jamie: So, the BLM is offering an educational program through the University of Nevada, Reno called Wildfire and Range Land Ecology Education. And it has been developed for firefighters that want to work up into fire management before one series was selected to participate in educational program. So, it's a compressed course you'll do a class for two to three weeks, and have three or four weeks off, and then jump back into another one. It's a mix of web-based classes and fieldwork. But it's catered to firefighters. So, during the fire season, quote, unquote, you're not going to be enrolled in courses. We started a little bit earlier, so, I have to fly out to Nevada in April and be away from the crew for a couple... three weeks at the end of April to work on this.

Jasmine: Congratulations on 20 years in the career of fire. Thank you for letting us interview you, Jamie.

Ashley: We're excited to hear about your future goals being met. And you're always welcome to this podcast in the future seasons which we know you will be part of them.

Jamie: Awesome. Yeah, it's been fun.

Jasmine: Listen to our podcast every other Friday to learn more about our Jackson Hotshots.