



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the CSG?

The California State Guard (CSG) is a volunteer military reserve that protects California and its citizens from natural and man-made disasters, including wildfires, floods, earthquakes, and pandemics. It was formed to provide California with a trained and organized force in the event of a state emergency. The CSG is the volunteer component supporting the California National Guard.

Are you the National Guard?

No! The California State Guard is a state-level military organization which provides assistance and training to the California National Guard. The CSG is a reserve force that supports the state missions and federal readiness of the Army and Air National Guard. The CSG is authorized under the provisions of the Title 32, United States Code, Section 109(c)[12] and the California State Military Reserve Act.

What is JTFRS-SD?

As the only operational unit in the California State Guard, Joint Task Force Rattlesnake Support Detachment (JTFRS-SD) is a volunteer firefighting company supporting CAL FIRE and the California National Guard in wildfire suppression and disaster response missions across the state.

Why should I join?

For hands-on wildland firefighter training & experience, obtain your nationally recognized firefighting certifications, and an opportunity to serve your community. If you're interested in a fire career, the certifications you earn with Joint Task Force Rattlesnake will help you with CAL FIRE category placement.

Who can join?

Applicants must be 18 years or older, successfully pass a background check and physical exam, be a legal resident of the State of California and either a citizen of the United States or a permanent resident alien who has made legal declaration to become a citizen of the United States by filing Form N-300, Application to File Declaration of Intention with the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

How do I join?

Fill out the form at the Joint Task Force Rattlesnake website, and a recruiter will contact you. The recruiter will begin the application process. It will test your ability to properly complete forms, and to gather and submit documents. Your prompt response will signal your willingness and eagerness in joining Joint Task Force Rattlesnake.

What will I be doing as a wildland firefighter?

When activated, you may spend 12–16 hour days cutting hand lines, removing brush, and working in heat, smoke, and steep terrain alongside CAL FIRE and National Guard personnel. You'll be part of a military-style chain of command, wearing uniforms, attending drills, and operating in a mission-first environment.

Will I attend boot camp?

No! Instead of boot camp you will attend a Basic Orientation Course (BOC) over two normal training weekends. BOC introduces new non-prior service members to military customs and traditions, responsibilities, teamwork, and the operations of the California State Guard.

If I am prior military do I need to attend BOC?

Former members of the military are likely to have a smooth transition into Joint Task Force Rattlesnake. You will attend the Prior Service Orientation (BOC-P). The purpose of this course is to provide an overview of the structure and operations of the CSG and service members responsibilities for members who have served in the US Military within the last five years. BOC-P is a self-paced online course, completed within one year of joining.

If I'm prior military will my rank or ribbons transfer?

Any MOS qualifications, ribbons, medals, badges, or awards earned in federal or state national guard service transfer directly; this includes "combat patches". Depending on the rank earned and length of time since separation, previously-held rank in those services also transfers.

Will I be sent overseas?

No! The CSG mission is to protect California and its citizens from natural and man-made disasters, including wildfires, floods, earthquakes, and pandemics. The CSG will never be called into federal service, nor will you ever be deployed overseas in time of global conflict.

What certifications will I earn?

Joint Task Force Rattlesnake follows the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) standards. You can expect to complete the Firefighter Type 2 "Red Card" certification (which includes L-180, S-190, S-130), the Firefighter Type 1 certification (S-131), as well as the Portable Pumps (S-211) and the Wildland Fire Chainsaws (S-212). For individuals who perform at the highest standard there will be opportunities to complete the CAL FIRE Fire Fighter 1C – Wildland Certificate.

What is the time commitment?

As a Joint Task Force service member, you'll begin with 2–3 drills of initial entry training (IET), followed by your wildland firefighter certifications. You'll attend monthly weekend drills to maintain readiness, train with your crew, and stay physically prepared—this part is volunteer and unpaid. When wildfires or emergencies occur, you may be activated for 1 to 3 weeks and receive full pay. While deployment is optional, maintaining consistent training participation is essential to be eligible.

What is the age limit?

Applicants must be 18 years or older. We do not have a maximum age restriction. So, if you're worried about "aging out", yes, you still may be able to serve your community!

What are the physical fitness requirements?

The work performed by Joint Task Force Rattlesnake is considered arduous duty under the California State Guard. Arduous work involves above average endurance (aerobic fitness), lifting more than 50 pounds (muscular fitness), and occasional demands for extraordinarily strenuous activities. The following table outlines the physical fitness requirements to join:

CSG PFT STANDARDS FOR ARDUOUS DUTY MISSIONS							
ARDUOUS DUTY MISSIONS INCLUDE FIRE HAND CREW, SEARCH AND RESCUE TEAMS, AND BOATCREWS							
UTILIZES USAF AFI 36-2905 STANDARDS FOR CARDIO ENDURANCE, SIT UP, AND PUSH UP TESTS							
UTILIZES ARMY 600-9 STANDARDS FOR HEIGHT AND WEIGHT MEASURING							
		TIMED MIN/SEC	TIMED 1 MIN	TIMED 1 MIN			
		PER AGE	PER AGE	PER AGE			
AGES	GENDER	RUN TEST 1.5 MILE	PUSH UP	SIT UP			
<30	M	<13:14	44	46			
<30	F	<15:50	27	42			
30-39	M	<13:14	36	42			
30-39	F	<15:50	19	33			
40-49	M	<14:25	29	37			
40-49	F	<18:14	16	28			
50-59	M	<15:50	24	33			
50-59	F	<19:43	14	23			
60+	M	<17:34	22	28			
60+	F	<21:28	13	15			

Regular physical training is an integral part of drills and readiness activities, designed to build the endurance, strength, and agility required for wildland firefighting.

What is the CAL FIRE 1C course?

The 1C course hosted by Joint Task Force Rattlesnake is a paid 10-day training and selection course conducted 3-to-4 times per year that will earn you your CAL FIRE Fire Fighter 1C Wildland Certificate. The 1C is highly competitive and strenuous and covers essential wildland topics like fireline construction, crew organization, emergency procedures (including fire shelter deployment), personal protective equipment, and tool use.

How can I best prepare for the CAL FIRE 1C?

Typically, 25% of candidates are dropped from the course by day 2. Training to reach maximum scores will help ensure your success. Hiking with a 45-pound pack on your back is essential. The PAC Test consists of a flat, 3-mile hike with a 45lb ruck to be completed within 45 minutes, a maximum of 57 hand-release pushups, and a maximum of a 3 minute 40 second plank time in accordance with Army standards. Having your 10 Standard Firefighting Orders, 18 Watchout Situations, and 5 Common Denominators of Fatal Fires memorized word-for-word prior to course start is highly recommended. You will be pushed to your limits, as Joint Task Force Rattlesnake cadre, CAL FIRE cadre, and your peers assess you for academic, mental, and physical preparedness for the mission.

Will I be paid?

CSG service members are normally considered uncompensated state employees as an all-volunteer, non-paid organization. However, when called to Emergency State Active Duty (ESAD) during state disasters and emergencies, you will be paid at the same rate as the California National Guard. You will also be paid if on rotation or offered full-time employment with your local crew.

When will I be paid?

Whether working full-time for Joint Task Force Rattlesnake on a crew, back-filling on weekends, or deploying on a complex fire, most missions fall under Emergency State Active Duty (ESAD). Current ESAD rates for firefighters E-3 to E-5 (which makes up 85% of Joint Task Force Rattlesnake) is \$383 daily when not on an incident (garrison), and \$460 daily when on an incident (arduous duty).

Will I have to cut my hair or shave my beard?

When in uniform the CSG follows Army Regulation 670-1 for wear and appearance. For a high-level breakdown visit <https://www.goarmy.com/how-to-join/requirements/appearance.html>.

What are the height and weight requirements?

Being physically fit is vital to your success as a firefighter. A medical assessment will be conducted during the accessions process, to include height and weight standards for arduous missions. The following table outlines the height and weight requirements to join Joint Task Force Rattlesnake:

WEIGHT FOR HEIGHT TABLE - ARDUOUS MISSIONS - SOURCE AR 600-9 (16 JULY 2019)									
UTILIZES ARMY 600-9 STANDARDS FOR HEIGHT AND WEIGHT MEASURING									
HEIGHT	MINIMUM WEIGHT (POUNDS)	MALE WEIGHT IN POUNDS BY AGE				FEMALE WEIGHT IN POUNDS BY AGE			
		17-20	21-27	28-39	40+	17-20	21-27	28-39	40+
56*	85	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	111*	114*	116*	117*
57*	88	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	114*	117*	119*	120*
58	91	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	119	121	122	124
59	94	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	124	125	126	128
60	97	132	136	139	141	128	129	131	133
61	100	136	140	144	146	132	134	135	137
62	104	141	144	148	150	136	138	140	142
63	107	145	149	153	155	141	143	144	146
64	110	150	154	158	160	145	147	149	151
65	114	155	159	163	165	150	152	154	156
66	117	160	163	168	170	155	156	158	161
67	121	165	169	174	176	159	161	163	166
68	125	170	174	179	181	164	166	168	171
69	128	175	179	184	186	169	171	173	176
70	132	180	185	189	192	174	176	178	181
71	136	185	189	194	197	179	181	183	186
72	140	190	195	200	203	184	186	188	191
73	144	195	200	205	208	189	191	194	197
74	148	201	206	211	214	194	197	199	202
75	152	206	212	217	220	200	202	204	208
76	156	212	217	223	226	205	207	210	213
77	160	218	223	229	232	210	213	215	219
78	164	223	229	235	238	216	218	221	225
79	168	229	235	241	244	221	224	227	230
80	173	234	240	247	250	227	230	233	236

Do I pay for my firefighting uniform?

No! All firefighting protective clothing and gear will be issued to you as-needed for training and missions.

Do I pay for my military uniform?

Yes. However, after you have served one-year and attended all 12 drill sessions a stipend may be paid out. Joining the California State Guard will require out-of-pocket expenses, such as uniforms. This stipend helps to offset that expense.

What if I have a criminal record?

California State Guard service is prohibited if you have ever been convicted by a civil or military court of any felony, any misdemeanor involving moral turpitude, any misdemeanor involving domestic violence and/or any misdemeanor involving a sexual offense.

What if I have tattoos or gauging?

Certain tattoos are authorized, while others are not. Any visible tattoos will be discussed with your recruiter. Any tattoos that promote gang affiliation, racism, or are sexually explicit will automatically disqualify an applicant. Large earring holes known as lobe 'gauging' is an automatic disqualifier.

Is there a contract term?

While your commitment to join the CSG is voluntary, we ask that you join us with the intent to serve a minimum of 2 years. Your duty time is used for fire training and certifications, mission coordination, and interaction with our California National Guard counterpart. With your commitment to the CSG, you are expected to be at the drill sessions and are accountable to your assigned supervisor and commander.

Are there State benefits when joining the CSG?

There are many benefits to joining the CSG, including access to the Work for Warriors job placement program, legal advice/assistance, and the California Military Department's GI Bill Award Program paying up to 100% of tuition and fees at a University of California, California State University, or a California Community College.

Is the CSG new?

Our roots go back to 1846 before California was even a state. Over the years our name and structure have changed, but our mission has not – protecting California. Today's California State Guard was organized and activated as the State Defense Force of California on January 2nd, 1941 as an amendment to the California Military & Veterans Code § 550.

To learn more visit <https://stateguard.cmd.ca.gov/public/>.