

NFFE News



NFFE Protects Wildland Firefighter Boot Stipend

May 11, 2021

For the last six years, Forest Service employees who work in the field and fight fires have enjoyed a stipend to cover a portion of the cost of their safety boots; the culmination of a years-long fight led by NFFE's Forest Service Council and its persistent leaders.

The benefit, articulated in Chapter 27, Section 9 of the Master Agreement, originally provided \$300 every three years to subsidize the cost of the very expensive, Agency-required safety boots. In October of 2020, the benefit increased to \$500 and the three-year period for reimbursement was reset.



In October of 2020, the boot stipend benefit as articulated in the NFFE-FSC Master Agreement, increased to \$500 and the three-year period for reimbursement was reset.

While the increase in reimbursement was a victory for Forest Service employees, there has been confusion since its passing about how the Agency will cover the cost in light of budget changes. At the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest in Oregon, some employees were told they might have to purchase their own boots this year due to lack of funding.

When Erin Kidwell, NFFE Forest Service Council Region 6 Vice-President and FL 1968 Chief Steward heard about the confusion regarding the boot stipend she immediately got to work investigating the issue and advocating for our members.

“Our members need these boots to do their jobs. They are essential to employees’ safety. A good pair of boots cost about \$500. Our folks being told they might lose access to this benefit when we had it in our collective bargaining agreement was not right. We will continue the fight to uphold our agreement and this important benefit.”

It appears her hard work paired with the support of the NFFE Forest Service Council paid off. Kidwell quickly confirmed that all NFFE Forest Service employees eligible for the boot stipend will be reimbursed as specified in the Master Agreement up to \$500.

Randy Erwin, NFFE National President, applauds her and the NFFE Forest Service Council’s quick action and resolution of this issue.

“This is a real benefit for our members and one that wouldn’t exist without the efforts of our Union and NFFE’s Forest Service Council. The Union fought hard to establish this important benefit, and we’ll fight just as hard to protect it.”

If you are interested in learning more about whether you are eligible for a boot stipend and how to get it, contact your regional Forest Service Vice-President or NFFE National Business Representative. Together, we will fight to ensure our members are safe as they work hard to fight fires and protect our National Forests.

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