



Smokejumpers fight fires by jumping out of planes and into flames.

SMOKEJUMPERS

Picture this: A huge wildfire is burning in a forest. It is destroying everything in its path. But the forest has no roads, so fire trucks can't get to it. Who can fight this wildfire? How can they get there quickly?

Meet smokejumper Madison Whittemore. She is a special kind of firefighter. She travels to put out fires in places that are hard to get to. How? She jumps out of planes to get there!



Wilder Wildfires

In recent years, wildfires have gotten bigger and harder to fight. That's because climate change is making some places hotter and drier. As our planet warms, long stretches of very high temperatures are causing even more wildfires.

The heat and dryness caused by hot, dry weather helps create fuel. Fuel is anything that can catch fire. In the forest, dead trees, old leaves, and dry grass may all be fuel for fires.

Smokejumpers to the Rescue

Putting out a wildfire is a tough job. That's where smokejumpers come to the rescue. When Madison and her fellow smokejumpers arrive at a fire, their supervisor, or team director, shares a plan for fighting the fire. Then the smokejumpers get to work. They grab their tools to clear away fuel. They may dig a deep ditch around the fire, called a trench. Sometimes

they'll even try to destroy the fuel by setting small fires. The goal is to stop the fire from spreading.

To do the job, smokejumpers have to be extra strong. After jumping from the plane, they may hike to a fire with over 100 pounds of gear on their backs. When the fire is out, they "pack out." This means hiking to a pick-up spot with their gear on their backs. They get picked up and brought back to base where they can rest. Their important work is done.

Smokejumping is hard work, but Madison loves it. It allows her to protect people and forests. It has also changed her life. She told a reporter that smokejumping gave her an opportunity to push herself and see what she was capable of. It gave her a purpose.

Smokejumper Gear

What keeps smokejumpers safe in the air, on the ground, and at the fire? Check out this diagram to learn more.

Helmet

The helmet protects the head. The mesh prevents smokejumpers from getting hurt by a broken branch on trees as they land.

Back-Up Parachute

Used if the main parachute does not work.

Leg Pockets

The right leg pocket has rope inside. The left pocket fits snacks and even a jacket.

High Collar

Protects against tree branch injury.

Main Parachute

It's on the smokejumper's back.

Personal Gear Bag

Holds socks and extra clothing.

