

Mission Mules Packer

Mission Mules Disaster Response Volunteer Position

Position Purpose

Mission Mules Packers are experienced backcountry mule packers who support the organization's disaster response and remote-access operations. Packers are responsible for safely operating mule strings in challenging environments and helping Mission Mules transport supplies and equipment to communities that may be inaccessible by conventional transportation.

This is an experienced field position requiring strong mule-handling and packing skills, sound field judgment, adaptability, and the ability to operate effectively in remote and austere conditions.

Packers work under the direction of the Lead Packer and Mission Mules Leadership while contributing their experience, observations, and judgment to the mission.

Primary Responsibilities

- Deploy with Mission Mules pack teams to disaster areas, remote communities, and other locations requiring specialized access.
- Safely operate and manage a pack string across varied terrain and changing conditions.
- Assist the Lead Packer with pack operations, route decisions, stock management, and field logistics.
- Monitor the safety, condition, and performance of the stock, team, equipment, and loads.
- Pack, load, secure, transport, and unload supplies and equipment.
- Assist with route selection and navigation through unfamiliar or difficult terrain.
- Evaluate routes and field conditions for suitability and safety for stock, personnel, and equipment.
- Identify and address problems involving stock, equipment, loads, routes, or changing conditions within the scope of the mission.
- Problem-solve and improvise when normal procedures, equipment, routes, or resources are unavailable.
- Adapt between packing and riding a mule or horse according to mission requirements.
- Establish, maintain, and break down field camps and stock operations.
- Maintain and properly use Mission Mules equipment and report deficiencies or replacement needs.
- Monitor individual animals for changes in behavior, condition, soundness, or performance and promptly communicate concerns.
- Assist other Packers and Mission Mules Wranglers as needed.
- Provide the Lead Packer with relevant field observations, recommendations, and situational information.
- Perform other duties necessary to safely and effectively accomplish the mission.

Experience Requirements

This position is intended for **experienced backcountry mule packers**.

Applicants should have demonstrated experience with:

- Packing and managing mule strings in backcountry environments.
- Long-distance travel with pack animals.
- Loading, securing, and balancing pack loads.
- Handling and caring for mules in unfamiliar and changing environments.
- Riding and working with mules or horses.
- Navigating difficult terrain with stock.
- Camping and operating in remote environments.
- Working safely around livestock and pack equipment.
- Responding effectively to unexpected problems and changing field conditions.

Experience in disaster response, search and rescue, wilderness operations, emergency response, or similar field environments is strongly beneficial.

Required Certifications & Qualifications

- **Current CPR certification.**
- **Current First Aid certification.**
- **Valid driver's license.**

Additional wilderness, emergency response, horsemanship, packing, navigation, or related certifications are beneficial.

Field & Environmental Expectations

Mission Mules deployments may involve remote, austere, damaged, and unpredictable environments.

Packers must be prepared to:

- Operate in all types of weather.
- Travel through steep, rocky, muddy, wooded, flooded, damaged, or otherwise challenging terrain.
- Work around damaged infrastructure and changing disaster conditions.
- Sleep outdoors or in backcountry conditions.
- Spend multiple days in the field with limited access to normal conveniences.
- Work long or irregular hours when mission requirements require.
- Carry and move heavy equipment, supplies, feed, water, and pack loads.
- Work safely around unfamiliar people, animals, equipment, and environmental hazards.
- Adapt when conditions change or the original plan is no longer workable.

Transportation & Towing Experience

Packers may assist with transporting Mission Mules stock, trailers, equipment, and supplies.

Experience hauling livestock or equipment trailers is strongly preferred.

The ability to safely operate towing vehicles and handle trailers **up to and exceeding 33 feet** is highly desirable. Packers should be comfortable maneuvering, positioning, loading, securing, and transporting trailers in a variety of conditions and locations.

Field Judgment, Navigation & Problem Solving

Packers must be capable of making sound decisions when conditions change or the original plan is no longer practical.

They should be able to:

- Identify potential problems and hazards before they escalate.
- Evaluate routes, terrain, weather, loads, stock condition, and other operational factors.
- Navigate unfamiliar terrain using appropriate tools and techniques.
- Determine whether routes are appropriate for stock, personnel, and equipment.
- Develop practical solutions using available resources.
- Improvise when equipment, supplies, routes, or assistance are unavailable.
- Communicate route conditions, hazards, problems, and recommendations clearly.
- Recognize when an issue requires the Lead Packer or Mission Mules Leadership.
- Balance mission objectives with the safety of people, stock, and equipment.

Stock Knowledge & Animal Care

Mission Mules Packers are expected to develop a strong working knowledge of the organization's stock.

Packers should become familiar with individual mules and horses, including their normal behavior, movement, temperament, condition, strengths, limitations, and working habits.

Packers are responsible for:

- Monitoring stock throughout operations.
- Recognizing changes in behavior, appetite, movement, hydration, fatigue, or overall condition.
- Identifying potential injuries, illness, soundness issues, or equipment-related problems.
- Promptly communicating concerns to the Lead Packer or Leadership.
- Supporting appropriate feeding, watering, rest, grooming, and general care.
- Maintaining practices that protect the safety and welfare of the animals.

Teamwork & Leadership

The Mission Mules Packer works closely with the Lead Packer and other members of the response team.

Packers are expected to:

- Follow the direction and chain of command established by the Lead Packer and Leadership.
- Provide relevant observations, recommendations, and field information.
- Anticipate the needs of the pack string and team.
- Assist other team members when needed.
- Work independently when assigned.
- Communicate clearly and consistently.
- Know when to take action and when to seek direction.
- Support safe, organized, and effective field operations.

Experienced Packers may be asked to assume additional responsibility or lead a pack string when directed by Mission Mules Leadership.

Deployment Expectations

This is a **rapid-response volunteer position**.

Packers must be willing and able to:

- Deploy with little or no advance notice.
- Travel significant distances to support an active response.
- Remain deployed for several days or longer when required.
- Operate away from home and normal support systems.
- Maintain readiness of personal gear and required equipment.
- Respond during weekends, holidays, or other times when disasters occur.
- Remain flexible as mission requirements change.

Availability will vary among volunteers, but reliability is essential when a Packer accepts a deployment assignment.

Physical Requirements

This is a physically demanding field position. Packers must be capable of:

- Lifting and carrying heavy equipment, supplies, and pack loads.
- Handling livestock and packing equipment.
- Loading and unloading trailers and pack animals.
- Walking and riding for extended periods.

- Traveling over uneven and difficult terrain.
- Performing physically demanding outdoor work.
- Working extended hours when operationally necessary.
- Functioning effectively in outdoor and backcountry conditions.

Professional Representation of Mission Mules

Every Packer represents Mission Mules in the field and is expected to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the organization's mission and values.

The purpose of the operation extends beyond moving a mule string or delivering a load. Packers are serving people in need. Operational decisions should reflect that purpose while protecting the safety and welfare of the team, animals, and communities being served.

What Success Looks Like

A successful Mission Mules Packer is someone the Lead Packer and Leadership can trust in difficult circumstances.

They know their stock, understand their equipment, make sound field decisions, recognize problems early, navigate challenging terrain, and contribute practical solutions when plans change. They work effectively as part of a team, operate independently when assigned, and remain focused on three priorities: **the safety of the team, the welfare of the animals, and the needs of the people Mission Mules serves.**

The mission comes first: reach those who need help, serve them well, and do it safely.