



Bureau of Indian Affairs Branch of Wildland Fire Management News Release

For Immediate Release

Line of Duty Fatality Fort Apache Hotshot Crewmember – Deon “Dino” Classay



On July 24 at approximately 6 am, firefighter Deon Jason Classay was found deceased while working on the lightning-caused Diamond Fire on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation near Whiteriver, Arizona.

Fighting the 35 acre wildfire was the Fort Apache Helitack crew and the Fort Apache Hotshots. Following completion of a handline around the fire, all resources hiked to an established spike camp for the evening. As resources returned, the Incident Commander determined Classay was not accounted for and initiated a search. After several unsuccessful attempts to contact him throughout the evening, local, county and state law enforcement agencies were requested to assist with search efforts. At 6:18 am, Deon “Dino” Classay was found dead.

An Interagency Serious Accident Investigation Team comprised of specialists from the Bureau of Indian Affairs and USDA Forest Service arrived July 26 to begin the investigation process. The outcome of the investigation will help the interagency wildland fire community improve safety procedures and practices that take place during wildland fire suppression activities.

Acting BIA Fort Apache Agency Superintendent, Lynn Polacca spoke highly of Classay, “he was well liked and committed to excellence. An expert sawyer, he earned the respect of his crewmembers and was a leader the crew looked up to. He will be missed by his family, fellow crewmembers, and community.”

Classay, born May 5, 1968, served on the Fort Apache Hotshot Crew for 22 years. He is survived by his wife of 26 years, Mitzie Classay, two children, Thane and Mandy, and two granddaughters, Kaliee and Kamarie.

A two night wake will take place beginning Friday July 29 at 10am and will conclude when he is laid to rest Sunday July 31st. Services will be held at the Chief Alchesay Activity Center in Whiteriver, AZ at 1pm. He will be buried at the family plot in Seven Mile, Arizona at the Solid Rock Cemetery.

Sympathy Cards and donations can be sent to:
Fort Apache Agency
Branch of Forestry
180 West Horseshoe Drive
Whiteriver, AZ 85941
C/O: Candy Lupe

#BIA#