



TO :

FROM : National Wildfire Coordinating Group

REPLY TO : NWCG@nifc.gov

DATE : 07/28/2003

SUBJECT : SAFETY BULLETIN : Cramer 72 Hour Final Report

Please see the attached 72-hour final report on the Cramer fire fatalities.



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Washington
Office

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P.O. Box 96090
Washington, DC 20090-6090

File code: 6730
Route to:

Date: July 27, 2003

Subject: Expanded (72-Hour) Briefing
North Fork Ranger District, Salmon Challis National Forest
July 22, 2003

To: Thomas J. Mills, Designated Safety and Health Official

THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IS PRELIMINARY AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Name of injured or deceased (if the next of kin have been notified): Jeff Allen and Shane Heath

Narrative:

The Cramer Fire was first reported by a Salmon-Challis National Forest fire lookout on Sunday afternoon, July 20, 2003. The fire was reconned by aircraft shortly after detection and reported as three acres, burning midslope in Ponderosa pine and grass. The fire was located on the Salmon River, near Cramer Creek, at an elevation of 4000-5000 feet. Engines, helitack, air attack, airtankers, and a heavy helicopter were dispatched to the fire. By nightfall, the fire had grown to 10 acres.

A Type 3 IC, a Type II hand crew, one Type I helicopter and two Type III helicopters and an airtanker were assigned to the Cramer Fire on Monday, July 21, 2003. Suppression efforts were hampered by steep terrain and rolling debris. By the end of the day the fire had grown to approximately 220 acres.

On the morning of Tuesday, July 22, two helicopter rappellers from the Indianola helirappell crew, Jeff Allen and Shane Heath, rappelled onto a ridgeline above the fire to cut a helispot. Three Type II hand crews were flown into a helispot and initiated suppression action at the bottom of the fire. An Air Attack Group Supervisor, Lead Plane, two airtankers and three helicopters continued to work the fire.

By midafternoon the handcrews that had been flown into the fire were pulled off the fireline due to increased fire intensity at the lower helispot. The crews walked to the Cache Bar boat ramp. Shortly thereafter, the rappellers called for a helicopter to pick them up, saying that it was becoming very smoky. A helicopter was launched to retrieve the two rappellers but was unable to land due to extremely poor visibility.

Radio contact with the rappellers was lost. Both helicopters assigned to the fire searched for Jeff Allen and Shane Heath. Later in the day, two more rappellers, rappelled into the fire area to search on foot for the two missing crew members. While they were making their way towards the helispot Jeff Allen and Shane Heath had been working on, personnel on the other helicopter spotted the missing men and guided the rappellers to the scene.

Weather conditions on the Cramer Fire were hot and dry, with afternoon high temperatures in the 90's and minimum relative humidity in the teens to low 20's. No major frontal systems were in the area, skies were clear, and winds were generally in the 10-15 mph range.

The bodies of Jeff Allen and Shane Heath were found and personnel secured the site. Neither firefighter was in a fire shelter. Jeff Allen was a 24-year old native of Salmon, Idaho, and a 4-year member of the Indianola helitack crew. Shane Heath, a 22-year old from Melba, Idaho, was in his second year on the Indianola crew. Services for Jeff Allen took place in Salmon, Idaho on Saturday July 26, 2003. Services for Shane Heath are scheduled for Monday, July 28, 2003 in Nampa, Idaho.

LINDA DONOGHUE
Team Leader

cc:
Safety Manager (at the level authorizing the investigation)



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