



**TO :**

**FROM :** National Wildfire Coordinating Group

**REPLY TO :** NWCG@nifc.gov

**DATE :** 07/24/2009

**SUBJECT :** SAFETY BULLETIN : 24hr / 72-hour Preliminary Briefing, Backbone Fire Heli-well Accident, Six Rivers National Forest (July 17, 2009) / 24 Hour Notification Firefighter Fatality (RESEND)

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Many could not access the Forest Service links , so here are the two briefing documents.



Preliminary\_72hour\_Briefing,%20Backbone\_Fire\_Heli-well\_Accident[1].doc



24Hour\_Notification\_Firefighter\_fatality[1]\_Backbone\_Fire\_Heli-well\_Accident.doc

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**File Code:** 6730

**Date:** July 21, 2009

**Route To:**

**Subject:** Preliminary 72-hour Briefing, Backbone Fire Heli-well Accident, Six Rivers National Forest (July 17, 2009)

**To:** Chuck L. Myers, Deputy Chief of Business Operations

**THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IS PRELIMINARY AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE**

**Location:** Six Rivers National Forest, Lower Trinity Ranger District, Backbone Fire – Approximately twenty miles northeast from the town of Willow Creek, CA (41.10.843 / 123.22.484)

**Date of occurrence:** July 17, 2009

**Time of occurrence:** Approximately 1516 Hours

**72 Hour Report:** Thomas A. Contreras

**Activity:** Wildland Fire Suppression – Backbone Fire

**Mission:** Wildland Fire Suppression

**Number of fatalities:** None

**Property damage:** (such as to vessels, equipment, and structures) Sikorsky Model SH-3H Helicopter

**Preliminary fact findings:** On July 17, 2009 at approximately 1516 hours, a Sikorsky SH-3H helicopter N613CK owned by Croman Corporation, was conducting water drop missions on an active fire line from a heli-well (portable water site) located on Forest Service Road 10N04 north of the fire's edge within the Klamath National Forest, while in support of the Backbone Fire. The aircraft came to rest on its left side and a small fuel spill resulted. Clean-up of the fuel will be conducted. The crash occurred outside the wilderness and not close to any water source.

Two people were on board, both walked away from the accident. The pilot refused treatment, and the co-pilot was evaluated at an area hospital, treated and released.



The crash site and road are both closed and secured by Law Enforcement for the assigned investigation team, who arrived on July 18, 2009 at 1800.

**Narrative:** This helicopter was conducting water drop missions supporting an active fire line. The helicopter was returning to a tended heli-well (portable water site) operation located on Forest Service Road 10N04 north of the fire's edge within the Klamath National Forest. While engaging in water refill missions at the heli-well site, utilizing a belly tank with a snorkel, helicopter N613CK came in contact with the ground.

The aircraft came to rest on its left side and both pilots were able to extract themselves from the aircraft and walk away as on site personnel provided rescue and crash assistance.

Both pilots were evaluated on scene. The pilot refused treatment, and the co-pilot was evaluated, air evacuated off the accident site and taken to an area hospital, treated and released.

On site investigation is on going by a team who are party representatives to the NTSB investigation and all matters related to public information will be disseminated through the NTSB. The aircraft removal from the accident site is beginning today, July 21, 2009.

*/s/ Thomas A. Contreras*  
THOMAS A. CONTRERAS  
Team Leader

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**File Code:** 6700/5100

**Date:** July 21, 2009

**Route To:**

**Subject:** Preliminary 24-hour Briefing of Firefighter Fatality

**To:** Regional Forester – Randy Moore

**THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IS PRELIMINARY AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE**

**Location:** Adjacent to the Willow Creek Helibase – Trinity River – Approximately one half mile north from the town of Willow Creek, Ca.

**Date of occurrence:** July 21, 2009

**Time of occurrence:** Approximately 1010 PDT

**Report By:** Tom Hudson

**Activity:** Rappel Proficiency

**Mission:** Training

**Number of fatalities:** One

**Narrative:** The helicopter and crew were assigned to the Backbone incident and were engaging in a proficiency rappel when a rappeller fell while descending from the aircraft. An Accident Investigation Team is being mobilized at this time. The individual was provided medical attention immediately at the scene. The Base medical staff, the Humboldt County Coroner's Office, and the Humboldt County Sheriff's Office were dispatched and involved in the initial response.

*/s/ Tyrone Kelley*  
TYRONE KELLEY  
Forest Supervisor

cc: Tom Wagner, Paul Brewster, Gary Morgan, Jami Anzalone, Dennis Hogenson, Gary Brown, Lori Clark, Vince Welbaum, Sharon Heywood, Patty Grantham, Scott Armentrout, Kerri Greene,



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