



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

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Subject: Preliminary Brief on fatal traffic accident involving contractor Grayback Forestry Inc., Merlin, Oregon, June 21, 2002.

To: Branch Chief, Safety, Health, and Uniforms

On June 21, 2002, at 1720, a 15-passenger van carrying 11 firefighters from La Grande, Oregon to the Hayman Fire in Colorado was involved in a one-vehicle accident three miles east of Parachute, Colorado on Interstate 70.

The group was from Grayback Forestry, Inc. of La Grande, Oregon. The van was one vehicle in a convoy of eight traveling to the Hayman Fire near Denver. The van had been on the road for an extended period of time but had stopped in Parachute prior to the accident. The van was eastbound on I-70 when the driver lost control and went off the left side of the road momentarily into the median. The van then came back across two eastbound lanes and rolled four times, ejecting four of the occupants. There are four confirmed fatalities at this time. The other seven were taken to local hospitals in Rifle, Glenwood Springs, and Grand Junction. Three are in critical condition. The remaining four were treated and returned to La Grande.

/s/ LINDA R. DONOGHUE
Investigation Team Leader

