



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

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File Code: 6700

Date: June 25, 2002

Subject: Expanded briefing of fatal traffic accident in Parachute, Colorado, involving contractor Grayback Forestry Inc., Merlin, Oregon, June 21, 2002.

To: Branch Chief, Safety, Health, and Uniforms

THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IS PRELIMINARY AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Names of injured or deceased: **Deceased:** Retha Shirley, Zackary Zigich, Bart Bailey, Jacob Martindale, Daniel Rama; **Serious Bodily Injury:** Patrick Shorre, Anthony Kyle, Brandon Fiala; **Minor Injury:** Megan Helm, Jason Staten, Robert Heins.

Preliminary factual findings: To date, the Investigation Team has determined that serious driver error by the driver caused the van to both initially leave the highway onto the median and enter a sideways roll upon reentry. Factors contributing to the driver's actions (distraction, exhaustion) are still being investigated.

Narrative: 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 one and a half miles east of Parachute, Colorado on Interstate 70.

The group was from Grayback Forestry, Inc. of Merlin, Oregon. The van was one vehicle in a convoy of eight and had been on the road for an extended period of time. The convoy had stopped in Parachute prior to the accident. The van was eastbound on I-70 when the vehicle drifted to the left side of the road and into the median. The van then came back across two eastbound lanes, rolling four times and ejecting three of the occupants.

There were four confirmed fatalities the day of the accident. A fifth occupant, Bart Bailey, died June 24 in the hospital. Two other occupants remain hospitalized. The remaining vehicle occupants, as well as the rest of the convoy, has returned to La Grande.

/s/ LINDA R. DONOGHUE
Investigation Team Leader

