



United States Wildland Fire Service
& United States Forest Service

3833 S Development Ave
Boise, Idaho 83705-5354



Date: 7/29/2026

Route To: Christopher Wilcox, United States Wildland Fire Service, Designated Agency
Safety and Health Official
Sarah Fisher, Deputy Chief for Fire and Aviation Management, US Forest Service

Subject: Amended 72 Hour Preliminary Report: Gore and Knowles Fires

THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IS PRELIMINARY AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Location: SW of Loma, Colorado, Gore and Knowles Fires

Date of occurrence: June 27, 2026

Time of occurrence: Approximately 1600

Team leader: Chuck Russell, Assistant Director, Fire Coordination, US Wildland Fire Service
Deputy team leader: Mark Pieper, Fire Management Specialist

Activity: Fire suppression

Number injured: 1

Number of fatalities: 4

Narrative: Firefighters from the Rifle Interagency Helitack Crew, staffed by both USWFS and USFS employees, were involved in a burnover event while responding to initial attack fires in the Upper Colorado River Interagency Fire Management Unit. Two firefighters were evacuated with burn injuries and received treatment in a Level I burn center. Firefighters Emily Barker, Nick Hutcherson, and Sydney Watson did not survive the burnover. Firefighter Nate Matthews remained under medical care until he passed away from his injuries on July 24, 2026.

A Wildland Fire Serious Accident Investigation Team (SAIT) jointly led by USWFS and USFS is investigating this incident.

cc: Thomas Heinlein, Bureau of Land Management - Colorado
Paul Hohn, United States Wildland Fire Service
Erin Phelps, United States Forest Service
Scott Sugg, United States Forest Service
Jake Nuttal, United States Forest Service