



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
UNITED STATES WILDLAND FIRE SERVICE

In Reply Refer to:

Date: August 14, 2026

To: Chief Brian Fennessy, Fire Chief, US Wildland Fire Service
Sarah Fisher, Deputy Chief for Fire and Aviation Management, US Forest Service

From: Kelly Kane, Alaska Geographic Area Fire Chief, US Wildland Fire Service

Subject: 72-Hour Preliminary Report: Bear Trap Fire

THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IS PREMILINARY AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Location: Ely, Minnesota

Date of Occurrence: August 11, 2026

Time of Occurrence: 10:40

Activity: Wildland Fire Suppression

Number of Fatalities: 1

Narrative: A firefighter from the Scorched Earth Services crew assigned to the Bear Trap Fire experienced a medical emergency. Resuscitation efforts were not successful, and the firefighter, Leslie R. Washington, did not survive.

Leslie was a wildland firefighter assigned to a crew supporting federal wildfire response operations on the Bear Trap Fire. Out of respect for the family's privacy, no further medical information will be released at this time.

An interagency Wildland Fire Serious Accident Investigation Team (SAIT) is being mobilized in accordance with established protocols. The SAIT will conduct a comprehensive review of the incident and provide recommendations to enhance firefighter safety and emergency response.

The U.S. Department of the Interior's Wildland Fire Service, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and Alaska Division of Forestry and Fire Protection are coordinating resources and assistance for the family, coworkers, and loved ones affected by this incident. Support efforts are ongoing to ensure all impacted parties receive necessary assistance during this difficult time.

cc:

Christopher Wilcox, United States Wildland Fire Service
Steven Miller, United States Forest Service
Tyler McCowan, United States Wildland Fire Service
Matt Holmstrom, United States Forest Service