



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS
FORT APACHE AGENCY
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Cedar Fire Entrapment/ Fire Shelter Deployment 72 Hour Report

TO: Bryan Bowker, Regional Director Western Region
FROM: Nona Tuchawena, Superintendent, Fort Apache Agency
SUBJECT: Cedar Fire Entrapment / Fire Shelter Deployment 72 Hour Report

This report contains additional information from the 24-Hour Report.

Name of Fatality Victim(s): None

Number and Type of Injuries: 6 were evaluated, 2 were treated for smoke inhalation

Narrative: An Interagency Serious Accident Investigation (SAI) Team, led by Clark Richins, Team Leader, Bureau of Indian Affairs, reported to Western Region, Fort Apache Agency on June 30. They received a Delegation of Authority to investigate the incident. Members of the SAI Team include: Chief Investigator, Safety Officer, Personal Protective Equipment Specialist, Long Term Fire Analyst, Hotshot Crew Representative, Writer/ Editor, Public Information Officer, and Regional and National Agency Liaisons. They are conducting a comprehensive investigation on contributing factors of the entrapment / deployment. At the end of their investigation a Factual Report will be provided to the Western Regional Director.

Basic Facts:

- The Navajo Interagency Hotshot Crew was assigned to check and monitor the southwest flank of the fire in an area where they had previously been assigned for several operational periods.
- Six members of the crew were working along an uncontrolled section of the fire's edge.
- The crew observed low intensity surface fire behavior prior to the event.
- At approximately 2:30 p.m., fire behavior began to increase.
- In response to a large fire whirl that rapidly formed, the crew moved into a previously burned area and deployed their fire shelters at approximately 2:50 p.m.
- Three lookouts were in place and observed the event from two separate locations.
- An additional firefighter was scouting the fireline.
- Radio communications were maintained among the crew and were sufficient throughout the entire event.
- Agency personnel initiated an emergency response to the incident in a timely manner.

- All of the firefighters walked out of the fire area and were transported to Summit Healthcare in Show Low. They were treated and released that evening.
- After the crew was released from the hospital, a Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Team was convened and made available to the crew.
- After interviewing with the SAI Team, the crew was released to their home unit.

Action Taken to Date: Evidence is in process of being collected. Personnel interviews, equipment, site photographs, weather and voice data are being analyzed.

National Wildfire Coordinating Group Terminology:

- **Fire Whirl:** Spinning vortex column of ascending hot air and gases rising from a fire and carrying aloft smoke, debris, and flame. Fire whirls range in size from less than one foot to over 500 feet in diameter. Large fire whirls have the intensity of a small tornado.

//s// Clark Richins, Team Leader

cc: Robert Lacapa, Fort Apache Forest Manager; Leon Ben, Western Regional Forester; Carlos Nosie Jr., Western Region Fire Management Officer; Aaron Baldwin, Branch Chief, Branch of Wildland Fire Management; Joel Kerley, Aviation & Safety Director, Dalan Romero, Fire Operations Director