



United States Department of the Interior
BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS
Fort Apache Agency
Whiteriver, AZ



PRELIMINARY (72-HOUR) REPORT

FROM: Lynn Polacca, BIA, Fort Apache Agency Deputy Superintendent

TO: Lyle Carlile, BIA, National Interagency Fire Center, Fire Director

THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IS PRELIMINARY AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE

LOCATION: Diamond Fire, Whiteriver, AZ

DATE OF OCCURRENCE: July 24, 2011

TIME OF OCCURRENCE: Approximately 0600 hours (Arizona Time)

TEAM LEADER (POSITION): Incident Commander, Type 5

ACTIVITY: Wildland Fire Suppression

NUMBER & TYPE OF INJURY: 1, Fatality

PRELIMINARY FACT FINDINGS: The lightning caused Diamond Fire was reported to Show Low Dispatch on Saturday, July 23rd, 2011 at approximately 1200 hours Arizona time. The location of the fire was approximately 2.5 miles northeast of Ten Diamond Ranch on the north side of the Black River in the southeastern portion of the Fort Apache Indian Reservation.

Fort Apache Helitack initiated the Initial Attack and the Fort Apache IHC was dispatched to assist as the size of the fire increased. All resources were ferried to the fire area by a helicopter assigned to the Agency.

Terrain in the area is steep and rocky with a dense woodlands fuel type. Following containment with a handline around the approximately 65 acre fire, all resources were instructed to hike back up to the helispot to be transported by helicopter to a drop point where IHC vehicles were parked. While resources were awaiting aerial transport off the fire, the helicopter encountered a mechanical issue requiring it to suspend the upcoming troop shuttle.

At that time, IHC personnel devised a plan to shuttle crew carriers to a road above the fire area and the remaining crew personnel would hike to vehicles. The crew configured as squads began the hike up the steep, heavily wooded terrain to the proposed location of the vehicles. As the Incident Commander reached the new drop point of the vehicles, he initiated radio contact with the squads to determine time of arrival for personnel. As personnel were accounted for, one individual was late and did not respond to radio traffic addressed to him.

At that time an "Incident within an Incident" protocol was initiated and the Incident Commander of the Diamond Fire assigned the task of searching for the individual to a senior member of the IHC. After several sweeps of the area by personnel assigned to the fire, law enforcement from

local, county and state agencies were requested to assist with search efforts. Search efforts continued throughout the evening, and early morning hours until the missing firefighter was found deceased at 6:18 am. At that time all local suppression resources were removed from the fire and replaced with resources from adjoining units.

A Critical Incident Stress Management was ordered on July 24th and assisted fire resources, and other affected persons connected to the incident. The team was released July 25th, and is available for follow-up meetings as necessary. A Serious Accident Investigation Team (SAIT) has been ordered and is in place.

SUBMITTED BY: Lynn Polacca, BIA, Fort Apache Agency, Deputy Superintendent