



# United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS  
NATIONAL INTERAGENCY FIRE CENTER  
3833 SOUTH DEVELOPMENT AVENUE  
BOISE, IDAHO 83705-5354

**For Immediate Release:  
July 26, 2003 5:00 AM**

## **Ferry County Coroner Confirms Fatal Helicopter Crash**

Late afternoon on July 25<sup>th</sup>, one helicopter pilot was killed when the ship he was flying crashed while working on the northern section of the McGinnis flats fire near Keller, WA. Ferry County Coroner James VonSauer reported the pilot was killed when the KMAX helicopter he was flying crashed near Empire Creek approximately 4 miles Northwest of Keller.

At approximately 5:00 PM (PDT) it was reported that a helicopter had lost contact with air operations. Shortly after, another aircraft assigned to the fire confirmed that a helicopter was down. Rescue teams were immediately dispatched to the scene. At the time of the accident the weather in the area was clear with little wind. The cause of the accident is under investigation by the NTSB.

The McGinnis flats fire started near Keller Washington on July 18<sup>th</sup> 2003 at approximately 1:00 PM. Initial investigation has determined that the fire was human caused. That investigation is ongoing. The current size of the fire is 2217 acres.

In a statement late Friday night, Incident Commander Gary Jennings expressed his condolences to the family and friends of the fallen pilot.

**##END##**