



Safety & Health Working Team

TO :

FROM : National Wildfire Coordinating Group

REPLY TO : NWCG@nifc.gov

DATE : 07/02/2008

SUBJECT : SAFETY BULLETIN : Firefighter Fatality, Air Ambulance Collision

A wildland firefighter was killed in a private medical helicopter collision while being transported from the Grand Canyon to a Flagstaff, Arizona hospital on Sunday afternoon, June 29, 2008. Five other occupants of the two air ambulances were also killed and one occupant is listed in critical condition. Two responding ground personnel also received minor burns when the wreckage sustained a secondary explosion. Additional responding Forest Service units suppressed the wildfire caused by the crash.

The firefighter was a member of the Chief Mountain Hot Shots, a Bureau of Indian Affairs funded Native American crew based on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation in Browning, Montana. The crew was assigned to the Walla Valley Fire on the North Rim of Grand Canyon National Park.

The firefighter required treatment for a spider bite and was transported the South Rim Helibase by fire helicopter. While being treated at the local clinic he experienced an adverse reaction to the medication and was being transported by a private air ambulance to Flagstaff Medical Center. This helicopter collided with another medical helicopter as they were both on final approach to the Flagstaff hospital.

The accident is being investigated by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB).