

News Release



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OSHA Finds Safety Violations at Wildfire Site In Idaho *Notices Issued to U.S. Forest Service*

SEATTLE - The U.S. Labor Department's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has given its findings to the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service following the investigation of last summer's Cramer Fire near Salmon, Idaho. Two U.S. Forest Service (USFS) helitack crew personnel died at the site on July 22, 2003.

OSHA issued notices to the USFS for alleged serious, repeat and willful violations of safety standards. The willful notice listed violations of all 10 "standard fire orders" and 14 of 18 "watch out situations" listed in the Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations.

The notice for serious violations included:

- Failure to conduct fire complexity analysis;
- Failure to provide additional supervisory and suppression support;
- Failure to maintain and calibrate automated weather stations; and
- Failure to conduct inspections of fire operations for safety and health hazards.

OSHA also noted that the USFS delegated inadequately trained employees to identify, evaluate and correct hazards related to complex wild land fire safety.

The notice of an alleged "repeat" violation was issued because OSHA found that the USFS did not include elements related to safety and health program performance in evaluations for fire supervisors, fire program management officials and line officers. OSHA previously had cited the USFS for this violation on Feb. 8, 2002.

OSHA found the violations during its fatality investigation at the Cramer Fire site near Cache Bar on the north side of the Salmon River, approximately 50 miles northwest of Salmon, Idaho. The USFS may meet informally with OSHA to discuss the violation notices, including methods of correction and length of abatement periods.

The Occupational Safety and Health Act defines a willful violation as one committed with an intentional disregard of, or plain indifference to, the requirements of the OSH Act and regulations. A serious violation is one in which there is substantial probability that death or serious physical harm could result and the employer knew, or should have known, of the hazard. A repeat violation is an additional occurrence of a violation for which the employer previously had been cited.

OSHA is dedicated to saving lives, preventing injuries and illnesses, and protecting the health and safety of America's workers. In fiscal year (FY) 2002, the most recent year for which data have been published, there was a 6.6 percent decline in work related fatalities in the U.S. In FY 2003, OSHA conducted almost 40,000 inspections, and more than half focused on high-hazard industries. For more information visit www.osha.gov

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