

AGENCIES RELEASE ESPERANZA FIRE ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION REPORT

The US Forest Service and CAL FIRE released the Esperanza Fire Accident Investigation Factual Report at a 2 pm news announcement today, May 22, at the Yucaipa Community Center, 34900 Oak Glen Road in Yucaipa, Calif.

The Esperanza Fire took the lives of five San Bernardino National Forest firefighters, Mark Loutzenhiser, Jess McLean, Jason McKay, Pablo Cerda and Daniel Hoover-Najera. The top Forest Service official, Chief Forester of the United States Gail Kimbell and the Director of CAL FIRE, Chief Ruben Grijalva were to each make a statement. US Forest Service Safety and Occupational Health Manager Gary Helmer was then to discuss follow-up steps.

The purpose of the report, written by a team from the Forest Service and CAL FIRE, is to help prevent such tragedies from occurring in the future. It includes a narrative and timeline of events on Oct. 26, 2006, during the fire's early hours. The 18-member team, with the help of 14 technical specialists, also drew conclusions (findings) in a number of areas. The report also lists causal and contributing factors that led to the fatalities.

PDF copies of the 114-page report are available at http://www.fire.ca.gov/fire_er_memorial_esperanza.php

The fire, which was under CAL FIRE jurisdiction near Cabazon, California, ultimately burned about 41,173 acres over several days, and destroyed 34 residences and 20 outbuildings.