

Forest Service News

USDA Forest Service

San Bernardino National Forest

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Forest Service Releases Names of Deceased and Injured

Four fatalities and one injured while fighting wildfire

SAN BERNARDINO, CALIF. – It is with great sadness that we confirm the names of the Forest Service firefighters who tragically lost their lives while in the line of duty yesterday. The deceased are Mark Loutzenhiser, Jess McLean, Jason McKay, and Daniel Hoover-Najera. Critically injured is Pablo Cerda.

Mark Loutzenhiser, Engine Captain, was 44 years old and had 21 years of service. He was a certified Emergency Management Technician (EMT). He had worked previously as a hotshot crewman for the Vista Grande Hot Shots and also as a volunteer firefighter for Riverside County. He majored in fire science at Mt. San Jacinto College. He was a longtime resident of Idyllwild, Calif. where he was a great supporter and coach for the youth sports program.

Jess McLean, Fire Engine Operator, was 27 years old and had seven years of service. He had been a hotshot for three years with Vista Grande. He graduated from Banning High School in 1997 and attended fire science classes at Crafton Hills College. He was a resident of Beaumont, Calif.

Jason McKay, Assistant Fire Engine Operator, was 27 years old and had five years of Forest Service experience and four years as a volunteer firefighter in Adelanto. He also served on the Mojave Greens Type II crew. He was a certified EMT and earned an associate's degree in Fire Science. He was a resident of Phelan, Calif.

Daniel Hoover-Najera, Firefighter, was 20 years old and was in his second season of firefighting. He worked on the Tahquitz Type II crew in 2005 and was a seasonal employee in 2006. He graduated from San Jacinto Mountain View High School in 2004. He was a resident of San Jacinto, Calif.

Pablo Cerda, who remains in critical condition, is a 23-year-old Firefighter in his second season with the Forest Service. He was previously of the Tahquitz Type II crew. He graduated from Los Amigos High School in Santa Ana in 2001 and attended Fire Academy of Riverside Community College. He is a resident of Fountain Valley, Calif.

The five Forest Service employees were on Engine Crew 57 on the San Jacinto Ranger District. They were dispatched early Thursday morning to assist on a state managed wildfire, the Esperanza Incident. They were engaging in structure protection and firefighting activities when they were overrun by flames. The accident investigation is ongoing.

“Our deepest condolences go out to the families during this very tragic time,” said Jeanne Wade Evans, San Bernardino National Forest Supervisor. “All of us on the forest and in the fire service community are suffering a great loss.”

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