



United States Department of the Interior
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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To: Director and Deputy Director
State Directors
Assistant Directors
Center Managers

From: Assistant Director, Fire and Aviation

Subject: National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health Final Report F2011-17

Please find the attached preliminary copy of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) investigation report (F2011-17) on the fatality of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) firefighter Caleb Hamm. Similar to the BLM's Serious Accident Investigation, the NIOSH Fire Fighter Fatality Investigation and Prevention Program (FFFIPP) conducts investigations of firefighter line-of-duty deaths to formulate recommendations for preventing future deaths and injuries. The final report will be posted to the NIOSH website in May 2012.

The NIOSH report offers recommendations "to reduce heat stress and heat strain, and to prevent future cases of heat-related illness and exertional heatstroke among wildland firefighters." Although under no formal obligation to respond to the report, BLM Fire and Aviation will thoroughly evaluate each NIOSH recommendation for inherent merit and operational viability, and develop or modify pertinent fire operations standards, as necessary. This will be done according to established agency and interagency fire management practices, and in cooperation with the Designated Agency Safety and Health Official, the Fire Leadership Team, the Fire Operations Group, and the National Wildfire Coordinating Group's Risk Management Subcommittee.

The primary means by which we prevent accidents in wildland fire operations is through aggressive risk management. Our safety philosophy acknowledges that, while the idea level of risk may be zero, a hazard-free work environment is not a reasonable or achievable goal in fire operations. Therefore, as we develop improvements related to the NIOSH report and our own serious accident investigation report, please ensure that your firefighters and fire managers in all your local units factor heat awareness into their decision-making processes, and that they continue to follow critical operational and safety standards stated in the *Incident Response Pocket Guide*, the *Fireline Handbook*, and the *Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation*

Operations. These standards, and the leadership and good judgment of our firefighters, continue to be our best defense against the risks associated with working in the wildland fire environment.

Signed by:
Timothy M. Murphy
Assistant Director, Fire and Aviation

Authenticated by:
Hallie Locklear
Records Administrator

1 Attachment:

1 - National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health report CR337,
Caleb Hamm (37 pp)