



Commonwealth of Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet

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Division of Forestry Mourns Loss of Ranger Forest Ranger Dies from Injuries Sustained While Fighting Wildfire

FRANKFORT, Ky. – (Feb. 17, 2011) – Family, friends and the Kentucky Division of Forestry (KDF) are mourning the loss of Donald S. Lam who died earlier today from injuries sustained while fighting a forest fire in western Kentucky last September. Lam, 58, was a dedicated forest ranger technician and experienced wildland firefighter who had assisted with fire suppression efforts on the local, state and national level for nearly 12 years.

“This tragedy is a tremendous loss to our organization,” said Leah MacSwords, director of the Kentucky Division of Forestry. “When you think about what forest wardens do every day and the frequency in which they put themselves in harm's way for the protection of citizens and forest resources, it makes you realize the commitment and loyalty that make up their character.”

Lam, who had been in critical condition since the accident occurred on September 7, received injuries while working the Scotts Chapel Road Fire—a 12-acre wildfire in Livingston County. Lam was clearing a fire break for containment at the base of a bluff when a burning snag broke loose on top and rolled off striking him from behind. The impact left him unconscious and with serious injuries including second degree burns.

The Scotts Chapel Road fire initially spread from a burning brush pile during a county-wide burn ban. The brush pile was set fire by FCE Construction and Excavation while clearing a construction site owned by River Oaks Timberland Management. Currently, charges are pending for the person responsible for starting the fire.

Forestry officials urge all citizens to be aware of outdoor burning laws. Anyone found violating forest protection laws or other outdoor burning bans will receive a citation and/or a criminal summons to appear in court. Penalties may include fines of up to \$500 or imprisonment up to 6 months. In addition to court fees and possible imprisonment, suppression fees are collected from the person responsible for the origin of the fire. For more information, please contact KDF at 1-800-866-0555 or visit <http://forestry.ky.gov/Pages/default.aspx>.

Editor's note: *The mission of the Kentucky Division of Forestry is to protect and enhance the forest resources of the Commonwealth. The agency is responsible for preventing and suppressing wildfires on state and private lands as well as providing assistance to landowners and communities for the purpose of sustaining the health, diversity and productivity of our forests to meet the needs of present and future generations.*