

NEWS RELEASE

USDA Forest Service -- Northern Region



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I-90 Fire Shelter Deployment Investigation 72 Hour Report Released

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Fire Shelter Deployment Investigation Team has released the 72 hour report on the August 10, 2005 fire shelter deployment that occurred on the Tarkio Fire of the I-90 Complex on the Lolo National Forest. According to Bruce Fox, investigation team leader, this is an interim report and the team will now compile and analyze the information and prepare a report that will be forwarded to the Regional Forester. A "Review Board" will be appointed by the Regional Forester. This Board will review the report findings for adequacy and make recommendations to the Regional Forester.

The final report will not be finalized and released for some time. The investigation focuses on the all the events associated with the shelter deployment with the objective of avoiding situations that require fire shelter deployments. Investigation results will be released when the board of review completes their evaluation.

Some of the key facts released in the 72 hour report are:

- All three firefighters were unharmed during the event.
- As afternoon fire activity increased, firefighting resources were directed to withdraw from the fireline and move to safety zones.
- The dozer operator and two dozer bosses elected to move to an alternate safety zone when other firefighters contacted them and alerted them that the route to the primary safety zone might be compromised.
- The safety zone was a road junction the dozer crew had previously identified.
- For about an hour prior to front moving past them, the dozer operator further prepared the safety zone by removing adjacent fuel in a portion of the area.
- The dozer was positioned in the middle of the safety zone with the back of the dozer facing the direction of the oncoming fire front.
- The three individuals deployed their fire shelters in front of the dozer blade to protect themselves until the fire front passed.
- The dozer and a pick-up truck in the safety zone showed no visible damage after the fire had passed.
- The deployed shelters deployed were all "new generation" fire shelters.
- The three individuals were in their shelters for a period of several minutes while the fire front passed.

