



**TO :**

**FROM :** National Wildfire Coordinating Group

**REPLY TO :** NWCG@nifc.gov

**DATE :** 06/29/2009

**SUBJECT :** SAFETY BULLETIN : Expanded (72 Hour) Report, Freeman Reservoir Fatality

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**United States Department of the Interior**

**BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT**

**Fire and Aviation**

**3833 S. Development Avenue**

**Boise, Idaho 83705-5354**

**72 Hour Expanded Report**

**June 29, 2009**

To: Assistant Director, Fire and Aviation

Subject: Expanded (72 Hour) Report, Freeman Reservoir Fatality

**THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IS PRELIMINARY AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE**

LOCATION: Freeman Reservoir Recreation Area, Medicine Bow-Routt National Forest

DATE OF OCCURRENCE: June 26, 2009

TIME OF OCCURRENCE: Approximately 1630

TEAM LEADER: Sue Richardson, BLM

ACTIVITY: Chainsaw Training

NUMBER OF INJURIES: 0

NUMBER OF FATALITIES: 1

PROPERTY DAMAGE: None

NAME OF FATALITY VICTIM: **Brett Stearns**

NARRATIVE: On June 26, 2009, Bureau of Land Management engine crews from Northwest Colorado Interagency Fire Management Unit were conducting a chainsaw training field exercise. The field exercise was at the Freeman Reservoir Campground on the Hahns Peak/Bear Ear Ranger District of the Medicine Bow-Routt National Forest. The crews were divided into four separate saw training teams working in four different areas around the campground. At approximately 1630 hours, one of the teams, consisting of one instructor and two trainees, were felling a large dead aspen tree. When the tree began to fall, it got hung up in between two other aspen trees. In the process of freeing the tree, it broke in half and the top portion fell backwards and struck the sawyer. The sawyer, Brett Stearns, was killed. He was an engine captain for the BLM, stationed at the Little Snake Field Office in Craig, Colorado.

Action Taken to Date: On June 27, 2009, a national Serious Accident Investigation Team (SAIT), with interagency representation, was assembled at the Little Snake Field Office in Craig, Colorado.

On June 28, 2009, the SAIT conducted an agency administrator's in-brief with the Little Snake Field Office. After the in-brief, members of the SAIT were briefed by the local sheriff, who is investigating the accident.

Members of the SAIT traveled to the accident scene and were briefed by a saw team member who was at the site shortly after the accident. Two SAIT technical experts remained at the site until late afternoon.

Interviews with the crew members, who have been on administrative leave for two days, and preparation for an OSHA representative visit are being scheduled.

The SAIT out-brief with the local unit is tentatively scheduled for late afternoon Thursday, July 2, 2009.

/s/ Sue Richardson  
SAIT Team Leader

cc:  
BLM Safety Chief, WO-740  
Fire and Aviation Safety Manager, FA-300  
Official Case File, WO-740

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