

Message from the Chief

Chief's Memo – October 28, 2006

CDF Mourns the losses of our Federal Partners

I am writing this Chief's Memo from the Incident Command Post at the "Esperanza Fire" in Riverside County. This has been a tragic fire for all of us. The United States Forest Service (USFS) lost four firefighters as they battled a wildfire that has burned over 40,000 acres at the time of this writing. One other USFS firefighter remains clinging to his life, but remains in critical condition. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the families of those firefighters, as well as our federal partners. I have spoken to the leadership of the USFS Western Region and offered anything we can do to help them in their time of need.

This tragedy is made worse by the fact that the wildfire is suspected to be arson caused. A \$500,000 reward is being offered for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the perpetrator(s). Governor Schwarzenegger contributed \$100,000 on behalf of the State of California, matching Riverside County's initial offer. Many other private concerned citizens have also contributed. The outpouring of support is very appreciated and emotional for all. Our Critical Stress Incident Management (CISM) team is on site providing professional, caring, and much needed support.

I have walked the scene of this tragic accident with investigators. The accident investigation team will be providing information for the "Green Sheet" in hopes that these tragedies can be avoided in the future for all firefighters.

Please take a moment to remember in your own way these heroic firefighters who died in the line of duty, October 26, 2006: Mark Loutzenhiser, 44, USFS Engine Captain, Jess McLean, 27, USFS Fire Engine Operator, Jason McKay, 27, USFS Asst. Fire Engine Operator, Daniel Hoover-Najera, 20, USFS Firefighter, and Pablo Cerda, 23, USFS Firefighter, who remains in critical condition.

Regards,



Ruben Grijalva, Chief
Director / State Fire Marshal

