

Zion Helitack blog - Michael Reid's personal account of the August 5, 2008 S-61 accident in CA.

S-61 Helicopter Crash On The Buckhorn Fire!

It has been a long while since I last posted on the blog... I got busy with the season as always, and then before I knew it we were being released off district and on our way to Northern California to join in the massive efforts to support the wildfires ravaging their vast country. We had a difficult beginning to our roll, and it only seemed to worsen with time. Early on in our assignment to the Iron Complex near Weaverville CA. the life of a National Park Service employee was lost during felling operations. We were at the incident during this tragedy and it was difficult for some of my crew to undergo the helpless feeling of listening to the tragedy unravel over the radio, only later to find out that the firefighter had lost his battle with life during transport to Redding.

Following this incident we moved our operation over to the Willow Creek Helibase and continued to support the several fires on the Iron Complex. We had supported with troop shuttles, recons, and even the cutting of several helispots and digging line in preparation to hold the Buckhorn fire. Our days were filled with transporting people, and slinging gear into place for many operations that seemed to be a small, inconsequential effort against a fire that was determined to take more acres.

We were only a day away from coming home when we took part in an incident that will emotionally scar and change the lives of my crew and those on the Buckhorn fire. I have had a difficult time dealing with the shotgun of emotions that I have felt, and decided this night that perhaps I should talk briefly about what I saw and what I know happened during the Helicopter Crash on H-44 of the Buckhorn Incident...

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