

Executive Summary

The Esperanza Fire was reported on October 26, 2006 at 1:11 a.m. Pacific Daylight Time (PDT) in Cabazon, California, within the jurisdiction of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE). At approximately 7:15 a.m., five wildland firefighters from Forest Service Fire Engine 57 were overrun by the fire, while they were positioned near an isolated, vacant residential structure. All five firefighters were fatally burned by a sudden, intense fire run up a steep drainage below their location.

The fatalities occurred in the rural mountain community of Twin Pines, which is located in the San Jacinto Mountains approximately four miles southwest of Cabazon. Twin Pines is an identified wildland urban intermix with a recognized “extreme threat” rating for potential destructive impacts from wildfires.

Engine 57 and four other Forest Service fire engines from the San Bernardino National Forest, San Jacinto Ranger District were dispatched to the Esperanza Fire based on an Interagency Cooperative Fire Protection Agreement. All five Forest Service Type III fire engines and a March Air Force Base fire engine were performing structure protection in close proximity to each other when the fatalities occurred.

At the time of the burnover, the fire was several hundred acres in size burning rapidly in dry/dense chaparral/Manzanita, at the head of a steep drainage, and under the influence of Santa Ana winds.



Exhibit 1. Fire looking south from Cabazon area at approximately 4:00 a.m. PDT