

FIRST STRIKE ENVIRONMENTAL

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 1, 2006

Contact: Judy McLaughlin, 541.673.9892 for an interview with Robert Krueger, president, FSE

Oregon Fallen Firefighter Memorial Dedication to include eight from Roseburg company

Roseburg, OR...On a Saturday morning in August three years ago, eight First Strike Environmental firefighters were headed home to Roseburg, Oregon when they died in a tragic traffic accident on highway 20, west of Vale, Oregon.

Jesse James, Mark Ransdell, Ricardo "Ricky" Ruiz, Leland David Price, Richard Moore, Jeff Hengel, David Hammer and Paul Gibson had just finished a tour on the South Fork fire in Idaho.

The August 24, 2003 accident left their families, their comrades and their community in shock and mourning. But these young men and their contributions have not been forgotten. Their names are recorded at the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) Wildland Firefighter National Monument in Boise, ID and the US Fire Administration's National Firefighter Memorial in Emmitsburg, MD.

On Saturday, September 9, they again will be honored among more than 100 other structural and wildland firefighters who have made the ultimate sacrifice in Oregon since 1882.

The Oregon Department of Public Safety Standards and Training (DPSST) recently notified First Strike Environmental that their crew had been approved for inclusion in the memorial which is being dedicated in a ceremony in Salem at 1 pm at the new Oregon Public Safety Academy, 4190 Aumsville Highway.

"These men were all part of an elite firefighting team who gave the best of themselves to their love of this dangerous work. They were good employees, part of almost 200 good employees who are the reason First Strike Environmental had such an excellent safety record over our 20-plus year history—no fatalities, no serious injuries," said Robert Krueger, president of First Strike Environmental. "It is only fitting that they be honored in this way."

Merrill Saleen, Southern Idaho Incident Commander on the South Fork Fire, attested to the professionalism of the eight fallen firefighters in a letter to First Strike shortly after the accident: "Members of the crew were recognized on this fire as outstanding, hard working and dedicated firefighters. The Division Supervisor and Division Safety Officer who were with them for much of the incident, cited the heads-up, motivated and positive attitude held by the crew. They were, and are, a credit to your company... and a credit to the core of each and every person on that crew and their commitment to doing a job with pride and excellence."

"The inclusion in the Oregon Fallen Firefighter's Memorial is an honor," said Krueger. "We are an Oregon company that is dedicated to protecting our natural resources and the communities threatened by wildfires. We are grateful that our fallen firefighters will be remembered in this way."

Many First Strike employees and families will be in Salem September 9 to honor these men.

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