Paul E. Gibson

First Strike Environmental,

Roseburg Oregon Department of Forestry Contractor

Year of Death: 2003

The 8 firefighters were a part of a 20-member contract fire fighting crew. The firefighters were returning from 11 days of fighting fires in Idaho's Boise National Forest. The firefighters rode in a 16-passenger van as a part of a caravan of 2 vans and a truck. As the van traveled through a 2-lane sloped curve marked as a no passing area, it crossed the centerline to pass a tractor-trailer truck. The van struck a tractor-trailer truck traveling in the opposite direction head-on. When the vehicles came to rest, a fire began which consumed the van and the majority of the tractor-trailer.

The occupants of the tractor-trailer truck were able to escape the fire but all 8 firefighters remained in the burning wreckage of the van. The crew boss was in the lead vehicle some distance ahead and did not witness the crash. When the crew boss lost radio contact with the firefighters, they pulled over to wait for them to catch up. Seeing smoke in the distance, they drove to the crash scene and found the van totally engulfed in fire. As they traveled home, members of the crew had purchased beer and other food items in Idaho and again at a store just previous to the crash. All 8 firefighters were either killed in the crash of the ensuing fire and were pronounced dead at the scene.