



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Flight 93
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Flight 93 National Memorial News Release

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National Park Service Releases Investigation Report on Flight 93 Fire

Shanksville, PA – The National Park Service (NPS) today issued [a report](#) and [corrective action plan](#) that outlined the major factors that led to a devastating fire at the headquarters of Flight 93 National Memorial and steps the agency will take to prevent similar incidents in the future.

The fire, on October 3, 2014, destroyed three temporary buildings and thousands of memorial items that were intended for display at the park's visitor center that was then under construction.

According to local investigators and the internal NPS investigation, the exact cause of the fire could not be determined. The presence of improperly discarded smoking material, landscaping mulch that was too close to the building, and flammable decking material are all thought to have contributed to the intense fire.

Stephen M. Clark, superintendent at Flight 93 National Memorial said, "We are thankful to the community and the Families of Flight 93 for their patience and understanding during the course of the investigation. The destruction caused by the fire was tragic. The investigation points out many actions that either have or will be adopted at this park – actions that managers of other national parks across the country will make sure are part of their operations so that a disaster like this is not repeated."

There were significant losses of objects being prepared for exhibit in the new visitor center including a U.S. Flag that flew over the U.S. Capitol on Sept. 11, 2001. In all, 334 original photographs and 25 items of personal mementos of passengers and crew members of United Airlines Flight 93 were lost.

The photos had been loaned to the memorial by family members for digital reproduction. The digital reproductions of all photos were recovered. The lost objects include a boarding pass from United Airlines Flight 93, a parking receipt from Newark International Airport, and various identification cards of

passengers, all recovered from the crash site. Approximately 113 small objects and paper items donated by family and friends for the general collection were also lost.

Investigative findings included:

- The NPS smoking policy was not effectively implemented or enforced park-wide.
- The practice of applying mulch directly in contact with combustible building materials contributed to the rapid spread from the point of ignition.
- Plasticized lumber decking connecting the buildings was a major contributing factor to the speed and intensity with which the fire progressed and compromised egress from the buildings.
- Park staff stored museum collections in buildings that were not designed for collections storage and did not have a fire suppression and protection system.
- The Structural Fire Management Plan (SFMP) was insufficient, unsigned, and was not consistent with the response reported in the Automated Checklist Program (ACP) for the headquarters facility.
- The accession ledger was not stored in a fire resistant cabinet and therefore was destroyed in the fire.

Clark said recommendations for corrective actions to prevent similar accidents in the future have been accepted and are being adopted.

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