



National Park Service
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National Park Service Releases Serious Accident Investigation and Corrective Action Plan in Arrowhead Hotshot Brian Hughes Fatality



The 2018 Arrowhead Interagency Hotshot Crew. Captain Hughes is in the back row on the left.

NPS/J ZIEGLER

Today, the National Park Service released the findings and follow-up corrective action plan in the July 2018 death of National Park Service (NPS) Arrowhead Hotshot, Captain Brian Hughes.

Hughes, age 33, and his crew were working on the Ferguson fire on the Sierra National Forest near Yosemite National Park in California at the time of the accident.

In response to Hughes' death, the chief of the NPS Division of Fire and Aviation, William Kaage, assembled a team of interagency and interdisciplinary experts and tasked them with conducting a serious accident investigation. The aim of the [serious accident investigation team](#) was to learn what took place and identify lessons learned. A [board of review](#) created a corrective action plan with nine

proposed actions based on the report's findings. These mainly focused on additional training courses and recommended studies. The purpose of both the serious accident investigation team and board of review is to focus on learning and training to reduce the risk of incidents like this in the future.

On the morning of July 29, 2018, one of the Arrowhead Hotshots began cutting a standing dead hazard tree with help from Hughes. They intended for the tree to fall uphill; instead, it fell in the direction of the primary escape route, grazed another standing dead tree as it fell and struck Hughes as it was coming to rest. Efforts to save Hughes' life were made on scene by the sawyer, fellow firefighters, and paramedics on the ground and in the air. Despite these efforts, Hughes was pronounced dead as he was being flown to the Mariposa Helibase.

"Captain Hughes and his family will always be part of our National Park Service family," shared Woody Smeck, superintendent of Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks where the Arrowhead Hotshot crew is based. "The parks and the entire fire community honor the loss of Brian by reading and sharing the lessons learned from the serious accident investigation to help prevent future similar accidents."

Next steps are focused on following up on the actions outlined in the corrective action plan.

Both the factual report from the serious accident investigation team and the corrective action plan from the board of review can be found on the [Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Center website](#).

About the National Park Service. More than 20,000 National Park Service employees care for America's 419 national parks and work with communities across the nation to help preserve local history and create close-to-home recreational opportunities. Learn more at www.nps.gov.

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