



Doing the Right Thing Honoring a Fallen Firefighter

As humans, we endure many hardships and tragedies during our lifetimes. Because these challenges are often unavoidable, what really matters is our response to them. Can we show compassion and assistance for those in pain? Can we demonstrate professionalism and integrity? Can we learn from the event? The staff at Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks proved that these things are possible as they responded to an unthinkable tragedy at the end of the 2004 fire season.



Daniel Holmes in Kings Canyon National Park.

Daniel Holmes, a 26-year-old wildland firefighter with the Arrowhead Hotshots based at Kings Canyon National Park, was killed on October 2, 2004 when the top of a dead snag fell on him during a prescribed burn on his home unit. "The National Park Service is heartbroken over this loss," said Superintendent Richard H. Martin immediately following the accident. "My two priorities now are providing help for Daniel's family and supporting our employees here."



Arrowhead Hotshots in Rochester, New Hampshire, walk in funeral procession.

Four days after the accident, the Arrowhead Hotshots and NPS employees from around the country traveled to Rochester, New Hampshire, to attend the family funeral. Daniel's crew members served as pall bearers and also participated in the formal procession through town organized by the Rochester Fire Department. Strong and caring support was also provided for the family by the Critical Incident Stress Management program (CISM) of the National Park Service.

Two weeks later, Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks hosted a memorial service in Reedley, California. Over 700 guests attended including Daniel's mother, brother, girlfriend, twenty-nine Interagency Hotshot crews and representatives from federal and state agencies as well as county and city fire departments. The service began with a

procession of Arrowhead crew members, past and present, and Dan's family. Park managers offered words of support and then two aircraft from the local tanker base honored the gathering with a fly-over.

"The National Park Service can be very proud of this memorial service," said Roberta D'Amico, National Fire Communications Lead, one of the attendees. "The professionalism exhibited today honors Daniel, his family, the fire management community, and the park service itself."

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Seeking to learn from this whole experience, an interagency team of fire and safety experts are conducting an in-depth investigation of Daniel's accident so that similar accidents may be prevented in the future.

While nothing will bring Daniel back, his park service family is thankful for the opportunity to have known him, worked with him, and helped his family through this difficult time.

For more information about Daniel Holmes, please visit the Arrowhead webpage at www.arrowheadhotshots.org.



Crowd of over 700 people awaits procession at memorial service in Reedley, California.