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**Contact: Nedra Darling
202-219-4152**

VETERAN BIA FIREFIGHTER DIES FROM INJURIES SUSTAINED FROM PRESCRIBED BURN

Washington, D.C. – The Acting Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs regrets to announce that White Mountain Apache firefighter and Bureau of Indian Affairs' employee Rick Lupe passed away on Thursday, June 19, 2003, having succumbed to injuries received on May 14, 2003, during the Sawtooth Prescribed Burn on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation. Mr. Lupe was 43 years old.

"Rick Lupe was the type of person that loved his job and felt a real sense of honor to be doing what he was doing, the BIA will miss his skills and leadership," said Aurene Martin, Acting Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs. "Our deepest sympathies go out to his family and to the community for the lose of such an outstanding person."

Mr. Lupe served as a fire fuels management specialist at the Bureau of Indian Affairs' Fort Apache Agency. His firefighting career spanned 25 years starting out as a basic wild land firefighter, he later became a superintendent of the elite Fort Apache Hotshot crew, then moved to a division supervisor on a Southwest Type I Incident Management Team. In 2002, he was credited for his leadership, ingenuity and determination in stopping the spread of the massive Rodeo-Chediski Fire that saved the towns of Show Low, and Pinetop-Lakeside, and other nearby communities from burning.

Memorial Services for Mr. Lupe will be held Wednesday, June 25th, at the Alchesay High School Activity Center, Whiteriver, Az, beginning at 1:00 p.m.; followed by burial service at the Canyon Day cemetery. Mr. Lupe is survived by his wife Evelyn and three sons, Sean, Daniel, and Brent, a fund has been established to assist the family with their lose.

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