

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2023

Statement on the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) Helicopter Collision in Southern California

August 8, 2023

Jill and I send our deepest condolences to the families of the helicopter pilot and the brave California firefighters who tragically lost their lives Sunday. Every day, firefighters run toward danger, while everyone else runs the other way, because being a firefighter is not what they do, it's who they are. This tragedy is yet another example of their incredible bravery. As wildfires have intensified in recent years, more and more firefighters have put themselves in harm's way to defend our families and communities from out-of-control fires. That's why my administration has invested historic funding to address the underlying causes of wildfires, like record droughts caused by climate change. We owe it to our firefighters and their families to do everything we can to prevent these dangerous fires in the first place. Three families of three brave Americans have an empty seat around the dinner table tonight, and our hearts go out to them.

NOTE: The statement referred to Exclusive Use Helicopter Pilot Tony Sousa and CAL FIRE Assistant Chief Joshua Bischof and Fire Captain Tim Rodriguez, who were killed when their helicopter collided with another chopper while battling a wildfire in Cabazon, CA, on August 7.

Categories: Statements by the President : California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) Helicopter Collision in Southern California.

Names: Biden, Jill T.; Bischof, Joshua; Rodriguez, Tim; Sousa, Tony.

Subjects: California, CAL FIRE helicopter collision; Climate change; First responders, service and dedication; Forest management and fire prevention, improvement efforts; Natural disasters, climate change impacts; Wildfires, damage and recovery efforts.

DCPD Number: DCPD202300679.