



**United States
Department of
Agriculture**

**Office of the
Assistant Secretary
for Administration**

1400 Independence
Avenue SW

Washington, DC
20250-0103

OCT 27 2006

TO: All Employees

FROM: Mike Johanns
Secretary

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Johanns".

SUBJECT: Loss of Forest Service Employees

On Thursday, October 26, 2006, five Forest Service employees engaged in structure protection and firefighting activities were overrun by flames. Tragically, Mark Loutzenhiser, Jess McLean, Jason McKay, and Daniel Hoover-Najera lost their lives in service to our country as the result of the incident. Pablo Cerda survived but is critically injured. The incident investigation is ongoing.

The dedicated employees of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) are our most valued resource, and the loss of any affects all of us in the USDA family. Flags at USDA are being flown at half mast in honor and memory of those brave individuals lost. Please join me in extending my deepest gratitude and most heartfelt sympathy to the families of these individuals.