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## **15 Firefighters Met Death With Prayer on Lips**

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Editor

The 15 firefighters who perished in the Mendocino National Forest last night died frantically, with prayers on their lips. This was indicated by the postures of 11 of the horribly seared bodies as they lay, singly and in groups, over a 150-foot area alongside a hillside in clear view of the Alder Springs road. As you clambered over the rugged ravine scarred hillside, going east from Powder House Point, the first evidence of the tragedy lay about 200 yards from the road. On the steep hillside, blanketed with powdery ashes and studded with charcoal black stubs of burned underbrush, lay two canteens and the charred steel heads of a fire ax, shovel and rake, they gave mute testimony of flames. Fifty feet farther west was a body mummified by flames. Lying on its back, the arms were raised in a gesture as of prayer and supplication. Skidmarks uphill indicated the victim was running and slinging in a hopeless attempt to escape when he was caught by the fire. Fifty feet farther down the hillside two bodies lay together, on encroaching face downward as if trying to bury himself from the fire, and the other face up, with hands outstretched toward the sky. Another 50 feet beyond was a group of eight bodies, huddled together and hugging the ground. One of the victims had his right hand around the shoulder of a companion, as if to comfort him as they met death together. On many of the bodies, the only belongings, which were not consumed by the flames, were work boots and gold wedding rings. The rings were reminders that at least seven wives and 24 children had been left without husbands and father. They, as well as the men who perished, were an incendiary's victims.