



## N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources

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### **N.C. Division Of Forest Resources Firefighter Dies In The Line Of Duty**

**RALEIGH** – The N.C. Division of Forest Resources is mourning the death of a firefighter who was killed Thursday while fighting a blaze in Polk County.

Curtis Jessen, the division's assistant district forester in Asheville, suffered critical injuries after falling from the Big Bradley Falls near Saluda. Medical personnel pronounced Jessen dead a short time later.

“This is a very sad day for the entire Division of Forest Resources and all of our firefighting partners,” said Wib Owen, the director of the Division of Forest Resources. “Our thoughts and prayers are with Curtis and his family.”

The accident happened at about 11 a.m. on a quarter-acre wildfire that began Wednesday afternoon.

Jessen, 32, was working on the fire when he fell from a cliff. Authorities are investigating the circumstances surrounding Jessen's fall and the fire.

Jessen began working with the N.C. Division of Forest Resources in February 2002. Since that time he has worked as a forest inventory analysis forester and a service forester before being promoted to assistant district forester.

North Carolina has had nine wildfire-related deaths since 1960, according to the National Interagency Fire Center.

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