

## Ashe Native Blamed, Defended in Fire Actions

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The deputy director of the Arizona State Forestry Division is himself being criticized after blaming the leader of the Granite Mountain Hotshot crew of 19 firefighters all killed after getting trapped in a fierce Arizona inferno in June. But other firefighters and authorities are defending Ashe native Eric Marsh and his actions. Marsh was accused by Jerry Payne of violating wildfire safety protocols according to InvestigativeMedia.com. Marsh and 18 of his colleagues perished in the Yarnell Hill Fire on June 30. Payne told the site that he believes Marsh, 43, 'violated several basic wildfire rules including not knowing the location of the fire, not having a spotter observing the fire and leading his crew through thick, unburned vegetation near a wildfire.' His spotter is reported to have left his position to join the Hotshots as the fire approached. He was the only member of the Granite Mountain Hotshot crew to survive. Neither Payne nor the Arizona State Forestry Division are a part of the team investigating the fire, according to state officials, and his comments have been called into question by Carrie Templin, the public information officer for the investigation team. The official report into what happened isn't expected until September. Following Templin's comments, Payne backtracked slightly and claimed his comments to InvestigativeMedia.com were misinterpreted. He said that he did not intend to blame Marsh and that a break in standard firefighting guidelines is something that can happen in special circumstances.