Touching goodbye to fallen firefighter



People line Highway 50 in Meyers on Aug. 13 to honor firefighter Michael Hallenbeck. Photos/LTN



First responders and South Shore residents pay their respects.

It was a somber occasion that brought people on the South Shore to the curbside Thursday morning.

It was an opportunity to pay tribute to fallen U.S. Forest Service wildland firefighter Michael Hallenbeck. Hallenbeck died Aug. 8 after being struck by a tree while fighting the Sierra Fire that was burning outside the boundary line of Sierra-at-Tahoe.

The procession started in South Lake Tahoe and ended at Green Valley Mortuary in Rescue. U.S. flags were suspended from two ladder trucks in Meyers, under which the procession passed.

Private services for the 21-year-old will be Saturday.

“This tragedy reminds us of the dangers firefighters face every time they suit up. Anne and I are grateful for U.S. Forest Service Firefighter Mike Hallenbeck’s service and on behalf of all Californians, we extend our deepest condolences to his family, friends and colleagues,” Gov. Jerry Brown said in a statement.

Hallenbeck was stationed with the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit. This was his first fire. For the past couple winters the Shingle Springs man had worked at Sierra-at-Tahoe. The resort had a candlelight vigil for him on Aug. 12 and will have an event in his honor this winter.

— Lake Tahoe News staff report