

Florida pileup, three killed

WELLBORN, Fla. (AP) — Blinding smoke from a nearby forest fire caused a massive traffic pileup on a north Florida interstate Wednesday, killing three people and injuring 21 others, officials said.

Twenty-two vehicles were involved in the crash, including a tractor-trailer carrying acid, said Lt. Ken Knowles, spokesman for the Florida Highway Patrol. The acid was contained within the truck and never posed a danger, he said.

Knowles blamed the pileup on a blaze in Osceola National Park about 10 miles away.

"The low visibility was a result of the forest fire," Knowles said.

The injured, including a Hamilton County sheriff's deputy, were taken to hospitals. Rhonda Sherrod of Shands Hospital said her facility had treated 14 victims, with injuries ranging from minor to critical. Three of the more seriously injured were airlifted to other hospitals, she said.



The accident occurred on Interstate 10 shortly before 8 a.m. Officials closed 17 miles of the highway from Lake City to Live Oak, which is about 75 miles east of Tallahassee.

Because of so much twisted wreckage, it took several hours for authorities to determine how many vehicles were involved. At least five trucks could be seen jackknifed in the wreckage.

Murel McDonald, Suwanee County emergency services manager, said when he arrived at the scene, smoke from the forest fire blanketed the ground. The 7,000-acre fire was intentionally set, officials have said.

McDonald said he has requested satellite imagery from the state to determine the precise cause of the crash.

Erik Gebauer, of Melbourne, Fla., said he was driving a Mustang that slid under a tractor trailer.

"I don't understand how I lived through that," said Gebauer, his voice shaking. "All I can remember was pushing that freaking door. I felt death right behind me. I can't believe I made it."

The injured deputy, Michael Vickers, is believed to be in good condition, said Sharon Wetherington, Jennings city clerk.

"I just talked to his mother and everything seems fine," Wetherington said. "He's alert, he's talking and everything seems fine."

Man shoots firefighters, 4 dead

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP) — Firefighters responding to a house fire Wednesday were ambushed by an off-duty Memphis firefighter who stepped out of the garage and began shooting, authorities said. Two firefighters and a sheriff's deputy were killed, and a woman was found dead in the garage.

The suspected gunman, Fred Williams, was wounded and was undergoing surgery, Police Director Walter E. Crews said.

Williams had just returned to work as a firefighter this week after an extended leave on disability, Crews said. The suspect did not work at the same station as the men who were killed, but J.C. Fleming, deputy director of the Fire Department, said they probably knew each other from working the same shift.

"We don't expect this. We're here to fight fires," Fire Chief H.J. Pickett said. "You want to say it's part of the job, but it's not."

Williams did not live in the house, and his relationship to the woman found dead in the garage was unclear, Crews said. Authorities also were uncertain how the woman was killed and whether the fire was set to cover up her death.

Firefighters were called to the home just before 1 p.m. When they arrived, witnesses said, a man came out of the garage firing a shotgun and shouting, "Get away! Get away!"

Firefighters Lt. Javier Lerma and Pvt. William Blakemore were killed. Sheriff's Deputy Rupert Peete was shot in his patrol car as he responded to the report of the shooting, authorities said. His car crashed through a fence and ended up next to the house.

Memphis police officers then arrived and tried to get the gunman to put down his weapon. When he refused, "one of our officers got into a gun battle and the suspect was shot," Crews said.



Before firefighters arrived, neighbors reported seeing smoke coming from the house and alerted the suspect, but everything was fine, according to authorities. Soon after, deputies and firefighters arrived and were ambushed. "It's a tragic thing for the city and the families. The firemen, police, put their lives on the line a lot but don't expect to be shot at the scene of a burning house," President Clinton said during interview with CNN.

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effect, we had 10 participating hotels," Ferguson said. "Now there are over 50 not just in Texas. There is definitely success in numbers."

Ferguson also said the trend is spreading. Baylor University, Texas Tech University, the University of Texas (Austin) and Southwest Texas University have all passed similar resolutions regarding drowsy student driving.

Two weeks after spring break, Ferguson will travel to Texas Lutheran University to help pass the bill through their Student Senate.

During the fall of 1999, 10 college students in Texas alone were lost due to drowsy driving.

"With spring break almost here, we want students to be aware that there is an opportunity to avoid dangerous driving," Ferguson said.

Emily Jackson, a senior and English and political science major, said she would initially take advantage of the program if she were in a desperate situation.

"There have been times when I have been traveling and my eyes got so heavy I could hardly keep them open," Jackson said. "I have had to pull over and sleep in my car before. If there were a place to sleep, other than my car, I would take advantage of it."

FLUENCY

Language Institute (ELI) course, but he is not aware of any program like this for faculty.

Geoff Ashley, a student worker at the ELI and senior management major, said the ELI provides classes for international students who want to become proficient in English.

"I've never experienced a faculty member taking these classes, but we do have a lot of grad students," Ashley said.

Executive Associate Dean of the Texas Engineering Extension Service at A&M Dr. George Peterson said he does not feel that there is a problem with faculty English proficiency in A&M's engineering department.

"I don't believe we have a problem with the English proficiency of professors in the department of engineering, or with the faculty's ability to communicate," Peterson said. "One of the things we value is [the faculty's] ability to communicate."

Peterson also said that faculty candidates are interviewed, and their communication skills are evaluated, but they are not tested for English proficiency.

When asked if any students have voiced complaints about non-native English speaking faculty in the physics department at A&M, Ford said, "I have been aware of faculty for which communication skills were a problem, but never an insurmountable one."

Ford said his department is very careful in their hiring of faculty, especially with temporary professors, and the department is definitely concerned with potential faculty

members' English proficiency.

"We are careful with all teaching assignments we give the new faculty. We get complaints we do try to help with the aid of overheads, etc.," Ford said.

Even with these measures in place, some students have voiced problems understanding professors.

"There are students that express difficulty with communication in the classroom, some of which results from native English speakers, communicative also depend on many other factors," Ford said.

"It is true that there are students who have a problem with non-native (English) speaking faculty. These people are really trying to do a good job."

Lehmkuhle said that MU students identified some departments that have problems with faculty proficiency in English at MU during testimony in state legislature.

"Students testified that [the faculty English proficiency problem] tends to be in mathematics, engineering and hard sciences," Lehmkuhle said.

Lehmkuhle also said he is anxious to receive the results of a Web-based survey sent to 6,000 students to see if the reports are confirmed.

"We base internal policy on student feedback, and based on the result of the survey, we'll have an idea of the problem and what disciplines it concerns," Lehmkuhle said. "Obviously, we have some situations that are inappropriate and need to be addressed. We have some faculty that are not English proficient classes that depend on speaking. These situations must be changed."

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