

# **IOWA CRASH KILLS 9 PEOPLE IN PICKUP; TRUCK HIT TRACTOR-TRAILER; AUTHORITIES SUSPECT IMMIGRANT SMUGGLING**

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## **Body**

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A **pickup** crammed with nine **people** slammed into a **tractor-trailer** on Interstate 80 early Thursday, **killing** everyone in the smaller **truck**.

The **pickup** crossed the median and **hit** the **tractor-trailer** around 2:30 a.m., about 30 miles west of Des Moines, the **Iowa** State Patrol said.

"It was a mess," said Fire Chief Ben Gilman, who was first on the scene. "Everyone in the **truck** was dead. They probably died on impact."

Lt. Rob Hansen, spokesman for the state patrol, said, "We do have some idea to believe that these folks are not here legally, so it may take some time to identify them because of that." The **truck** had Colorado license plates, and all nine victims were Hispanic.

Estela Biesemeyer, an agent with the Immigration and Naturalization Service in Des Moines, said the number of **people** in the **pickup**, their ethnicity and the fact that they were headed east led investigators to **suspect** a **smuggling** operation.

"**Smuggling** through **Iowa** has always been here," she said. "Interstate 80 is a major route these **people** take from the border."

Biesemeyer said **pickups** and vans are commonly used by smugglers, and the agency has intercepted U-Haul **trucks** carrying as many as 50 **people**. She said the INS would probably contact the foreign consulates of Mexico or El Salvador to try to identify the victims.

The cause of the **crash** was under investigation. Sgt. Mike Van Berkum of the state patrol said the roads were not slippery and that there was no indication alcohol was involved.

The driver of the **tractor-trailer**, William Dean Hansen, 55, was taken to a hospital. His condition was not disclosed.

The **pickup** was so badly damaged, troopers could not tell where the victims had been seated, Rob Hansen said.

It was not immediately clear whether the bed of the **truck** was enclosed.

"Not many vehicles have nine seat belts in them," he said.

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## Notes

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NATION

## Graphic

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PHOTO; Photo by ROBERT NANDELL / DES MOINES REGISTER - Iowa State Patrol officers inspect the scene of a crash Thursday on Interstate 80 near Menlo, Iowa. The cause of the crash was under investigation.

## Classification

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