

## Three killed in fiery Christmas crash on I-10 in LaPlace

by Barri Bronston and Richard Rainey, The Times-Picayune

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An 18-wheeler smashed into the back of a sports utility vehicle along Interstate 10 in LaPlace early Christmas morning, killing a young woman and two children.

Five others were also injured when a three-car chain reaction caused the SUV, a GMC Yukon, to burst into flames.

Danielle Adams, 26; Kyren Thompson, 3; and Diavion Hite, 6, died in the accident, state police said.

Candace Walker, 23, was in the Yukon's front passenger seat. She remained in critical condition at the Critical Burn Center in Shreveport. An unidentified 3-year-old girl is also in critical condition after being sent to the Critical Burn Unit in Baton Rouge. The Yukon's driver, Lewis Knoten, 26, was sent to River Parishes Hospital with moderate injuries.

All six victims lived in New Orleans, police said.

The crash occurred just after midnight, as dense fog rolled along the interstate.

The Yukon and a Lincoln sedan traveling together in the right lane of eastbound I-10 had slowed when one got a flat tire, authorities said.

The driver of the 18-wheeler, Tammy Westbrook, 39, of St. Rose, told police she saw the two vehicles but couldn't swerve fast enough to avoid the crash. The truck slammed into the Yukon, which crashed into the car ahead of it. Westbrook suffered minor injuries.

The driver of the Lincoln, Alvin Welch, 27, of New Orleans, was sent to Ochsner Medical Center in Kenner with moderate injuries.

State Trooper David Easley and a firefighter, who happened to be driving by, pulled Knoten, Walker and the 3-year-old from the burning car. They couldn't reach the other three in time, police said.

Easley was taken to a nearby hospital, where he was treated for minor burns to his hands and smoke inhalation, authorities said. The accident is still under investigation, police said.

No charges have been filed, and police said they do not suspect that any of the drivers were impaired.

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