

3 killed, 1 injured when plane crashes in South Florida near a major highway

BOCA RATON, Fla. (AP) Three people were killed and one was injured when a small plane crashed Friday morning in South Florida near a major interstate highway and pushed a car onto railroad tracks, officials said.

Boca Raton Fire Rescue assistant chief Michael LaSalle said the plane crash that killed all three people on board emitted a fireball when it hit the ground, injuring a person in a nearby car. LaSalle said several roads near the Boca Raton Airport will remain closed near Interstate 95.

The Federal Aviation Administration identified the plane as a Cessna 310 with three people on board. It went down about 10:20 a.m. after departing from Boca Raton Airport bound for Tallahassee, the FAA said in an email.

Fire officials told the South Florida Sun Sentinel that the aircraft appeared to have pushed a car onto the railroad tracks, leading to the tracks' closure.

Josh Orsino, 31, said he was stopped at a red light at a nearby overpass when he heard a loud explosion and saw a huge fireball come toward him.

"We're just sitting there, and I see the palm trees start catching on fire," Orsino said. "I thought it was an oil rig or a car crash type thing."

Orsino said everyone was honking and trying to get off the overpass, not sure if it was going to collapse.



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Emergency crew inspect the site of a small plane crash in Boca Raton, Fla., on Friday.

"So I didn't know if the fire was going to come towards the vehicles, I mean, my first instinct was like, I got to get off this bridge. I'm getting out of here," Orsino said.

Miguel Coka, 51, who works near the Boca Raton airport, said he is used to seeing planes flying low as they prepare to land. But this time,

he and his colleagues noticed something was off.

"There was a rumble and everyone in the building felt it," he said when the plane crashed. "We are all shocked."

He captured the smoke and flames from the crash from his office balcony on video.

Boca Raton Mayor Scott Singer said the investigation

was just beginning.

"We are deeply saddened to confirm that a plane crash occurred earlier today within our community. At this time, details are still emerging, and we are working closely with emergency responders and authorities," Singer said in a statement. "Our thoughts are with all those affected by

this tragic event. We ask for patience and respect for the families involved as investigations continue."

The FAA and the National Transportation Safety Board are investigating, with the NTSB leading the probe.

NTSB officials arrived at the scene Friday afternoon and began collecting evidence and taking photos as part of their preliminary investigation. The plane wreckage will be taken to a salvage facility in Jacksonville for further investigation. The NTSB will release a preliminary report in 30 days, followed by a final report with the likely cause of the crash in 12 to 24 months.

The small plane crashed in South Florida a day after a New York City sightseeing helicopter broke apart in mid-air and crashed upside-down into the Hudson River, killing the pilot and a family of five Spanish tourists.

Federal officials have tried to reassure travelers that flying is the safest mode of transportation, and statistics support that. But aircraft collisions and near-misses have been drawing more scrutiny.

A midair collision killed 67 people near Washington in January. An airliner clipped another in February while taxiing at the Seattle airport. In March, an American Airlines plane caught fire after landing in Denver, sending 12 people to the hospital.

Tortillas fall flat in New Mexico, but will California add Bigfoot to its list of state symbols?

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) A proposal to designate the tortilla as New Mexico's official state bread had unanimous support from lawmakers. On Friday, though, it ended up falling flat.

It wasn't because Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham isn't a fan of the round wraps that have long been a staple of Mexican, Central American and Southwestern U.S. cooking. It was because she believes lawmakers missed opportunities to debate bills that deal with weightier matters as the state faces extraordinary challenges.

"Of course, I enjoy celebrating our unique culture," she wrote in her veto message, ticking off numerous official state symbols and songs that New Mexico has adopted over the years. "The question should not be how many more symbols we can collect — but whether we are meeting the moment with the gravity it demands," she continued. "We are living in perilous and unprecedented times. The stakes for our state have never been higher."

New Mexico's lawmakers were hardly alone in wanting to pad their state's list of symbols this legislative season. Georgia lawmakers recently passed a bill to recognize cornbread as their state's official bread. The Oregon Legislature, meanwhile, is considering adopting the T-bone steak as an official symbol. and there's a proposal in California to name Bigfoot the state's official cryptid — a creature that has never been proven to exist.

Striking a balance?

Legislating isn't always about taxes, tariffs and other serious issues. Lawmakers sometimes yearn for levity and the



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LEFT: Jasmine Perez holds up a fresh tortilla while standing at the pickup window inside Garcia's Kitchen in Albuquerque, New Mexico, on Thursday. BELOW: Cattle that are grass-fed, antibiotic and growth hormone free gather at Kookoolan Farm in Yamhill, Oregon, on April 23, 2015.

rare chance to find common ground.

With the push to adopt the tortilla, which was proposed by Las Cruces fourth-grader Adaline McIntosh, lawmakers debated the kinds of flour needed for the perfect specimen. Their conclusion: It depends on the meal. They also got a history lesson from state Sen. Benny Shendo, a member of Jemez Pueblo tribe who explained that the first bread in what is now New Mexico was made by Pueblo people who cooked blue corn paste on a hot stone.

State Sen. Cindy Nava talked about growing up on her mother's home-made tortillas.

"This is much bigger than a simple piece of legislation," Nava told fellow lawmakers. "This is culture and this is cultural awareness that we desperately need."

From cattle to cocktails

Official state symbols date to the late 1800s, as legislatures throughout the U.S. sought to stake cultural claims and foster pride among their residents. First came

flowers and flags. Then came fossils and foods, with the practice growing into a clever marketing tool to boost conversation and commerce.

Oregon already has an official state nut, fruit and pie. But adopting the T-bone would recognize the role that cattle has played in the state's development and its contribution to the economy, supporters say.

It's all about Nashville hot chicken in Tennessee, where a proposal calls for making the popular dish an official state food, joining hot slaw and Memphis barbecue.

Whereas some states adopted milk as their official drink, Nevada is considering a less wholesome option, Picon punch. The Pioneers of Sin City is weighing legislation that would add the cocktail that traces its roots to Basque immigrants who settled out West to its list of state symbols.

Shooting for the stars

In North Carolina, lawmakers are considering adopting the Moravian star, a multi-pointed decoration that

symbolizes the Star of Bethlehem and has become synonymous with Christmas.

Minnesota might adopt a whole constellation, with legislation pending that would add Ursa Minor to that state's list.

Texas, meanwhile, is considering adding the cannon as an official gun. The Lone Star State already has an official handgun — the Colt Walker pistol. But those who introduced this year's resolution say historic weapons such

as the cannon are powerful reminders of the state's struggle for freedom. That includes the first battle of the Texas Revolution, when settlers coined the phrase "Come and Take It" during a skirmish with the Mexican military over a bronze cannon.

A nod to nature

Colorado's list of symbols now includes *Agaricus julius*, a mushroom once mistaken as "The Prince mushroom" that supporters say plays a vital role in high-el-

evation spruce and fir forests.

Iowa and Michigan are considering adding butterflies to their lists. There are dueling proposals in Michigan, with black swallowtails and monarchs duking it out.

Minnesota lawmakers are mulling adopting an official state fossil — a giant beaver that was about the size of a small bear and roamed the area during the last ice age. It's part of a campaign led by the Science Museum of Minnesota.

California lawmakers are considering adding two things to their state list: solar energy and Bigfoot. California has the country's largest solar market, according to industry groups. As for the legendary creature, Bigfoot's proponents say it's part of popular culture and inspires searches that boost tourism in rural parts of the state.

