

U.S. NEWS

Deadly semitrailer crash in California renews federal criticism of immigrant truck drivers



1 of 2 | In this photo provided by the San Bernardino County District Attorney's Office High Tech Crimes Unit, shows officials processing the scene of a deadly multi-vehicle crash Tuesday, Oct. 21, 2025, in Ontario, Calif. (San Bernardino County Dist [Read More](#)

BY **COREY WILLIAMS**

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A 21-year-old semitruck driver accused of being under the influence of drugs and causing a fiery crash that killed three people on a southern California freeway is in the country illegally,

U.S. Homeland Security officials said Thursday.

Jashanpreet Singh was arrested and jailed after Tuesday's eight-vehicle crash in Ontario, California, that also left four people injured.

He faces three counts of vehicular manslaughter while intoxicated and driving under the influence causing injury, the San Bernardino District Attorney's office said.

Singh is scheduled for arraignment Friday. The district attorney's office said he does not yet have a lawyer.

Singh, of Yuba City, California, is from India and entered the U.S. illegally in 2022 across the southern border, Homeland Security said Thursday in a post on X.

That revelation prompted Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy to restate earlier concerns about who should be able to obtain commercial driver's licenses. Duffy and President Donald Trump have been pressing the issue and criticizing California ever since a deadly Florida crash in August was caused by an immigrant truck driver the federal government says was in the country illegally.

The Transportation Department [significantly restricted](#) when noncitizens can get commercial driver's licenses last month.

Duffy said this week's crash wouldn't have happened if Newsom had followed these new rules.

"These people deserve justice. There will be consequences," he said in a statement.

Newsom's office responded that the federal government approved Singh's federal employment authorization multiple times and this allowed him to obtain a commercial driver's license in accordance with federal law.

California's Highway Patrol said in a release that traffic westbound on Interstate 10, about 26 miles (42 kilometers) west of San Bernardino, had slowed about 1 p.m. Tuesday when a tractor-trailer failed to stop, struck other vehicles and caused a chain-reaction crash.

Dashcam video from the tractor-trailer obtained by KABC-TV shows the truck slamming into what appears to be a small, white SUV in the freeway's center lane. It continued forward, plowing into several other vehicles, including another truck. It then crossed over two lanes before crashing into an already-disabled truck on the freeway's right shoulder.

Flames can be seen erupting alongside the tractor-trailer as it crosses the two right lanes.

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California Highway Patrol Officer Rodrigo Jimenez says the agency has seen the KABC video and believes it is dashcam video from the truck that caused the crash.

“This tragedy follows a disturbing pattern of criminal illegal aliens driving commercial vehicles on American roads, directly threatening public safety,” [Homeland Security said Thursday in its X post](#).

Deadly crash in Florida

In August, a truck driver made an illegal turn on Florida’s Turnpike, about 50 miles (80 kilometers) north of West Palm Beach, and [was struck by a minivan](#). Two passengers in the minivan died at the scene, and the driver died at a hospital.

Homeland Security has said that truck driver, Harjinder Singh, was in the United States illegally. Florida authorities said he entered the U.S. illegally from Mexico in 2018.

Homeland Security said Harjinder Singh obtained a commercial driver’s license in California, which is one of 19 states, as well as the District of Columbia, that issue licenses regardless of immigration status, according to the National Immigration Law Center.

The Trump administration has pointed to the Florida crash while sparring with California’s Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom.

In April, Trump issued an [executive order](#) saying truckers who don’t read and speak the English language proficiently would be considered unfit for service.

“A driver who can’t understand English will not drive a commercial vehicle in this country. Period,” Duffy said the following month.

Under the new Transportation Department rules imposed last month, only noncitizen drivers who have three specific visas are allowed to qualify for commercial licenses. And states will be required to verify their immigration status. Only drivers who hold either an H-2a, H-2B or E-2 visa will qualify. H-2B is for temporary nonagricultural workers, while H-2a is for agricultural workers. E-2 is for people who make substantial investments in a U.S. business

The licenses will only be valid for up to one year unless the applicant's visa expires sooner than that.

On Thursday, Duffy called the California crash "outrageous" in a social media post.

"This is exactly why I set new restrictions that prohibit ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS from operating trucks," he wrote on X. "@CAGovernor must join every other state in the U.S. in enforcing these new actions to prevent any more accidents and deaths."

Activist sees bias against immigrant drivers

Bhupinder Kaur, director of operations for UNITED SIKHS, said the New York-based humanitarian relief nonprofit, is alarmed by what it sees as [growing bias involving immigrant drivers](#).

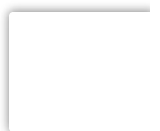
It was not immediately clear Thursday afternoon if Jashanpreet Singh is Sikh.

"Law enforcement and hasty social media posts constantly rush to name, photograph, and expose immigration status, while similar details about non-immigrant drivers remain withheld," Kaur told The Associated Press in an email Thursday. "The discretion officials cite as 'privacy' elsewhere seems to vanish when the driver is an immigrant."

Immigrant truckers make up nearly one in five long-haul drivers, Kaur continued, adding that most are fully licensed and law-abiding.

"Yet they face unequal scrutiny and coverage," Kaur said. "Selective transparency distorts public understanding and can even influence legal outcomes."

Associated Press writers Luis Andres Henao in Princeton, New Jersey, and Audrey McAvoy in Honolulu contributed.



This story has been corrected to say that California is one of 19 states in as well as the District of Columbia, that issue standard driver's licenses regardless of immigration status, according to the National Immigration Law Center.

