

# Fire in Honduran sugar cane field kills 13 children

*The tragedy leads mill workers to question common practices and safety measures for cutting cane*

BY FREDDY CUEVAS  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras — Honduran children hunting rabbits who were running from a burning sugar cane field were caught in the blaze themselves. Thirteen youngsters were killed, and a man and a 14th child were severely burned.

Workers set the fire Monday night as part of the harvest on 40 acres of the Choluteca sugar company in Santa Cruz, 100 miles south of the capital, Tegucigalpa, Security Ministry spokesman Leonel Saucedo said.

The children, who ranged in ages from 5 to 17, were in a nearby field, waiting to catch the rabbits as they escaped the fire. But the blaze spread out of control and trapped them, Saucedo said.

"The wind spread the fire rapidly," he said.

Firefighter Mario Velasquez said the sudden change confused the children, who began stripping off their clothes as they mistakenly ran toward the fire rather than away from it.

Eleven of them died immediately; two died in a hospital.

Workers did not know the children were nearby until they heard their screams and family members ran to rescue them, Saucedo said.

Relatives of the victims sobbed as the charred bodies were laid out on a concrete floor Tuesday, then lowered under white sheets into coffins. Most of the 500 residents of Santa Cruz, a

poor town on the border with Nicaragua, work as laborers in the sugar industry.

Emil Hawit, Honduras chief prosecutor for environmental affairs, said authorities were investigating to see if the company that owned the field, Azucarera Choluteca, could be accused of negligence. No formal charges had been filed in the case, however.

"Even though it's true the poverty of these people caused the tragedy, we should also determine if the company is at fault," Hawit said.

Azucarera Choluteca general manager Braulio Cruz said the mill did nothing wrong, adding that the burning of the fields had been planned months in advance. But he said that "the accident obligates us to improve the process of cutting cane."

President Ricardo Maduro met with families of the victims and said he would study whether the sugarcane fields really needed to be burned, a common practice used to clear a field of snakes and debris before harvest.

"We will do everything necessary so that similar tragedies don't happen in this country," he said. "This entire community is in pain, and it is really sad."

Velasquez said in the future officials would post guards around sugarcane fields before setting them on fire, an effort to keep residents away from the flames.

## IN BRIEF

### At least 31 dead in Indonesian plane crash

JAKARTA, Indonesia — A Lion Air passenger plane carrying more than 150 people skidded off a runway in central Indonesia during heavy rain and split in two pieces Tuesday, killing at least 31 people,

airline officials and witnesses said.

Three of the dead were children, and at least 62 people were injured, officials said. Some survivors remained stuck in the wreckage for more than three hours after the crash, according to media reports.

The accident occurred at about 6 p.m. as Flight JT583 landed in Solo, a thriving tourist town about 310 miles southeast of the capital, Jakarta,

according to the station. The MD-82 plane took off from Jakarta with 141 passengers and five crew members aboard, airline officials said.

The plane stopped in the East Java town of Surabaya before heading to Solo, where it skidded off the runway, broke up and came to rest in a cemetery about 100 yards away, airport officials said.

— The Associated Press



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## So long, Smarty pants

Ken Jennings ended his record shattering 74-show winning streak on "Jeopardy!" during Tuesday's episode. He earned \$2,520,700 — the most money ever won by a TV game show contestant.

Correct answers	Average wager	One-day winnings
2,613 out of 2,848 attempts	\$3,799 on Daily Double	Highest \$75,000*
51 out of 74 in Final Jeopardy	\$7,727 on Final Jeopardy	Lowest \$10,001
		* Show record Average \$34,063.51

**Losing question** "Most of this firm's 70,000 seasonal white-collar employees work only four months a year."

NOTE: Data is through 74 shows.

SOURCES: King World Productions Inc.; [tvgameshows.net](http://tvgameshows.net)



## IN BRIEF

### Ken Jennings, 'Jeopardy!' whiz, finally defeated

NEW YORK — "Jeopardy!" whiz Ken Jennings finally met his match after a 74-game run as a pop culture icon who made brainiacs cool, beaten by a woman whose own 8-year-old daughter asked for his autograph when they first met.

As someone who has always prepared his own tax returns, Jennings was tripped up in Final Jeopardy by this answer: Most of this firm's 70,000 seasonal white-collar employees work only four months a year.

The correct reply: "What is H&R Block?" But Jennings guessed Federal

Express, ending his remarkable run as the biggest winner in TV game show history with a haul of \$2,520,700.

Having an accountant friend who's nearly impossible to reach at tax time paid off big-time for his conqueror, California real estate agent Nancy Zerg, who ousted the baby-faced killer competitor in the episode airing Tuesday.

During his streak that began June 2, Jennings usually had opponents so thoroughly beaten that the Final Jeopardy question was meaningless to the outcome. But Zerg was within striking range at that point, with \$10,000 to Jennings' \$14,400. Her correct reply gave Zerg \$14,001 to Jennings' \$8,799.

— The Associated Press