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Immigration officials to leave relatives of crash victims alone

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U.S. immigration officials said Thursday they have no plans to pursue relatives of those killed or injured in a crash with a Nevada Highway Patrol trooper after the relatives revealed they are in the country illegally.

"It's hard to ignore this family with all the media attention," U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Phoenix spokesman Pete Ahr said. But, he said, targeting illegal immigrants who are otherwise law-abiding is low on the agency's list of priorities.

"Our priorities are national security, aliens who present danger to the community, alien smuggling, narcotics trafficking and Internet fraud," he said.

Four illegal Mexican immigrants were killed in a Sunday crash on northbound Interstate 15 after trooper Joshua M. Corcran rear-ended the 1988 Cadillac DeVille in which they were riding.

Pregnant 16-year-old Cecilia Lopez Cruz, who was in the Cadillac, is at University Medical Center in fair condition, her stepfather said Wednesday.

The passengers and their relatives worked landscaping and construction jobs in St. George, Utah.

A lawyer for the relatives, Eva Garcia-Mendoza, said they are unconcerned with their immigration status and are focusing their attention on Cruz's recovery and sending the victims' bodies to Mexico.

She said she knows of no case in which officials began deportation proceedings against immigrants involved in "a tragedy."

"They let the families take care of what they need to take care of," she said

Another immigration official, Virginia Kice, who works in the agency's L.A. bureau, said, "Anyone who is in the country illegally is subject to deportation." But, she said, "We have 8 (million) to 10 million people in this

country in violation of immigration laws. We have to prioritize those cases we identify for action."