

3 Die in Plane Crash

VERNON (AP) - All three people aboard a private plane, including one of the first savings and loan executives convicted in the 1980s scandals, died Saturday when the twin-engine aircraft crashed in North Texas.

Woody Lemons, his wife and mother were killed when their plane went down at 8 a.m. about seven miles north of Vernon in North Texas, authorities said.

The three had just taken off from the Wilbarger County Airport and were headed to a state track meet in Austin when their plane experienced engine trouble, said Vernon Fire Department Chief Charles Stewart.

Lemons' wife, Paula Lemons, was piloting the plane and had started to return to the airport when the aircraft plunged onto U.S. Highway 283. The plane skidded about 100 feet into a wheat field and burst into flames, Stewart said.

Federal officials were on the scene to investigate. The plane, a six-passenger British Beagle, was 20 years old, Stewart said.

Lemons, the former chairman of the board of Vernon Savings and Loan, became the first major bank officer brought down in the S&L scandal when he was convicted of bank fraud in 1988.

He was sentenced to 30 years in federal prison but served just 44 months before earning his freedom with an appeal he crafted himself. Lemons returned to Vernon in 1994.

Lemons' mother, Thelma Todd, lived in Crowell, about 30 miles southwest of Vernon.