

NASA nuclear engineer burned beyond recognition in Tesla as mystery of missing scientists deepens

●READ MORE: [Read the chilling texts UFO-linked scientist sent before being found dead that raise major questions over suicide ruling](#)

By [STACY LIBERATORE](#), US SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY EDITOR

The death of a **NASA** nuclear engineer has been thrust back in the spotlight as the nation reels from a disturbing pattern of 11 missing scientists.

Joshua LeBlanc, 29, was found burned beyond recognition in the wreckage of his 2021 **Tesla** Model 3 on July 22 last year in Huntsville, **Alabama**, according to local reports.

His family reported him missing at 4.32am ET that day, but it was not until 2.45pm that his vehicle was found.

Authorities were able to trace LeBlanc's movements using recordings from his Tesla's Sentry Mode, revealing the vehicle sat at Huntsville airport for nearly four hours on the morning of his death.

The vehicle slammed into a guardrail and several trees before bursting into flames.

The engineer's body was transported to the Alabama Department of Forensic Sciences, which took three days to identify due to the severity of the burns.

Family members said the sudden trip was never planned and told Louisiana news site KLFY that it was unlike him to go silent without updating them.

At the time of his disappearance, relatives told KLFY they suspected he may have been abducted from his home, noting that his phone and wallet were still inside the house. Brittany Fox, a friend of LeBlanc, told the Daily Mail that neither she nor his family has been contacted by authorities about any investigations since the accident.



+4

[View gallery](#)

Joshua LeBlanc, 29, was found burned beyond recognition in the wreckage of his 2021 Tesla Model 3 on July 22, 2025 in Huntsville, Alabama



+4

[View gallery](#)

The vehicle slammed into a guardrail and several trees before bursting into flames

According to LeBlanc's LinkedIn page, he began working as an aerospace technologies electrical engineer at NASA in October 2019, as first reported on by FOX News.

Electrical engineers in NASA's Aerospace Technology (AST) roles design, develop and test hardware and software used in spacecraft, satellites and ground support systems.

Specialists in this field also play key roles in emerging technologies, including nuclear propulsion systems tied to deep space missions and the agency's Moon to Mars initiatives.

Fox posted on Facebook on July 24 last year saying: 'We believe there is a chance he may have been abducted from the apartment and intend to keep searching.

'Tesla has been contacted numerous times to release [the] Sentry data, but the process has been slow. This story has too many holes in it and so many potential cameras to catch what happened.'

The Daily Mail has contacted the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency for comment.

Following the news of LeBlanc's death, many of his former colleagues shared their memories of the scientist online, with one telling how LeBlanc helped provide him with transportation when they were on an out-of-state conference even though they had just met.

'He will be remembered and missed amongst his colleagues,' the post read.

A former roommate of LeBlanc's also wrote that 'the passion that Josh had for space was inspirational, further driving my own search for a dream career. The love for the outdoors (beach included) enabled me to become more closely integrated with his friend group.

'His revelry was infectious and shifted from singing Outkast to sea shanties. These reasons and more are why I am so grateful to have known Josh and why he will be deeply missed. Fly high in the friendly sky,' the former roommate wrote.

Another friend said LeBlanc 'wasn't afraid of who he was.'

'This man helped me get through so much emotional growth and has helped me become the person I am today,' the friend wrote.

LeBlanc's death has resurfaced as a growing number of unexplained deaths and disappearances involving scientists continues to draw attention nationwide.



+4

[View gallery](#)

At the time of his disappearance, relatives told local KLFY they suspected foul play, noting that his phone and wallet were still inside the house

Energy demanding a sweeping investigation into the mysterious disappearances and deaths of nearly a dozen top US scientists, citing national security concerns.

Several individuals with ties to NASA, nuclear research, aerospace programs and defense-related work have vanished or died in recent years. Some observers have pointed to their access to sensitive projects as a reason the cases have attracted heightened scrutiny.

Among them is scientist Amy Eskridge, who had been researching anti-gravity technology before her death.

Eskridge was 34 when she allegedly died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head in Huntsville, Alabama, on June 11, 2022, the same city where LeBlanc later died.

NASA-affiliated researchers Michael David Hicks and Frank Maiwald, both of whom worked at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in California, also died in recent years.

Hicks died in 2023 at age 59 after previously contributing to NASA's DART mission, a project designed to test whether humans could deflect potentially dangerous asteroids.

Maiwald, 61, had served as lead researcher on technology aimed at helping future missions detect signs of life beyond Earth before his death in 2024.

In another case, pharmaceutical researcher Jason Thomas, who was working on cancer treatments at Novartis, was found dead in a Massachusetts lake on March 17, 2026.

Several individuals who disappeared have also drawn attention due to connections to retired Air Force General William Neil McCasland, who previously oversaw the Air Force Research Laboratory.

Nuclear research workers Steven Garcia, 48, Anthony Chavez, 78, Melissa Casias, 53, and NASA scientist Monica Reza, 60, have all been linked to projects connected to McCasland's leadership.

Elsewhere, physicist Nuno Loureiro, 47, was shot and killed at his home in the Boston suburb of Brookline on December 15, 2025. Authorities identified the suspected gunman as Claudio Neves Valente, a former classmate from Portugal.

Astrophysicist Carl Grillmair, 67, was also fatally shot at his home in California on February 16, 2026, after being attacked on his front porch around 6am local time.