

http://www.omaha.com/news/metro/investigators-continue-to-seek-cause-of-railcar-explosion-in-southeast/article_c3fd7da4-e2d5-11e4-bb34-5fab2484ea2c.html

Investigators continue to seek cause of railcar explosion in southeast Omaha that killed 2

Posted: Wednesday, April 15, 2015 12:00 am

By Alia Conley and Flora Zempleni / World-Herald staff writers

Authorities on Wednesday were continuing to investigate the cause of a rail yard explosion that killed two men Tuesday in southeast Omaha.

The force of the blast blew one man off a tanker car and to the ground, while the ladder shot out of the car and left another man trapped.

A third man was also blown off the car, but he was wearing a harness, which kept him from having any serious injuries, said Scott Allen, a spokesman for the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, which is investigating the incident.

One of the men killed, identified Wednesday as Dallas Foulk, 40, was lying on the ground when first responders arrived. He died after being taken in extremely critical condition to Creighton University Medical Center.

The other man's body was extricated by Omaha firefighters about 6 hours after the explosion. He was identified Wednesday evening as Adrian LaPour, 44.

Police said autopsies were scheduled to be performed on both men Wednesday.

Battalion Chief Tim McCaw of the Omaha Fire Department said the two men were cleaning out a tanker car near First and Hickory Streets about 1:10 p.m. when the explosion occurred.

"They were on their way out," McCaw said. "(Witnesses) said that they had heard an explosion from the railcar, and one person was lying on the ground when crews arrived."

Crews were unable to immediately enter the car because of unsafe levels of hazardous materials. They had tested the levels at least twice.

"We always err on the side of caution," McCaw said. "You have to just kind of wait, do the ventilation, do your due diligence and then let the readings come down before we enter."

Before it was safe to enter, firefighters were not able to communicate with the trapped man but had "obtained a visual," McCaw said.

Officials of the department's Special Operations team first entered the tanker about 7:15 p.m. and recovered the trapped man 15 minutes later, McCaw said. The man was pronounced dead at the scene.

Investigators are still determining what types of chemicals were in the car and what caused the blast.

The two men worked at Nebraska Railcar Cleaning Services, hired by GE Capital Rail Services, said a GE spokesperson.

OSHA has inspected the business three times in the last five years, the most recent being a follow-up inspection in March.

That case is still open.

The federal agency determined that there were seven violations from complaints in 2013, related to flammable and combustible liquids, confined spaces permits, noise exposure, respiratory protection and powered industrial trucks.

Nebraska Railcar Cleaning Services paid nearly \$7,000 to resolve the violation allegations, according to inspection documents.

“These incidents are preventable and often predictable, and that is why it is imperative the employer ensure that all OSHA standards and regulations are followed,” said Allen, the agency spokesman.

According to the cleaning company’s website, workers can clean a wide array of commodities, including food grade oils, herbicides, petroleum, sand and soils. It is unclear what substance the tanker held.

To clean a tanker car, two workers use a portable steam boiler to heat up the car and then clean with a hot water power washer, the website said.

All workers are certified with hazardous waste, fire, safety and medical training, the website said.

Nebraska Secretary of State filings show that Steven M. Braithwaite is the managing member of the cleaning service company and president of Omaha TransLoading Corp., a company housed in the same building at 115 Hickory St.

Attempts to reach Braithwaite or workers at the companies were unsuccessful.

GE Capital released a statement Tuesday:

“Right now we are focused on the safety of those in the shop and our thoughts and sympathies are with those who were affected by this unfortunate accident.”

Andy Tornow, 35, who works at body shop Paul Lucht and Sons Inc., at 1519 S. Third St., said he heard a sound like two trains colliding, turned around and saw flames shooting 30 to 50 feet in the air.

“It sounded ... just percussion ... just big,” he said. “Then it became dead silent.”

Thirty firefighters responded. Officials from the Omaha Police Department, OSHA and BNSF Railway Co., which owns the track and train lines, were also at the scene.

World-Herald staff writers Maggie O'Brien and Barbara Soderlin contributed to this report.

<http://www.wowt.com/home/headlines/Loved-Ones-Open-Up-to-WOWT-About-Second-Railcar-Victim-300417741.html>

Loved Ones Open Up to WOWT About Second Railcar Victim

Updated: Fri 10:19 PM, Apr 17, 2015

By: [Chase Moffitt](#)

Friday night, close friends of the second railcar victim opened up to WOWT 6 News after a loved one to many lost his life to tragedy earlier this week.

Until now details about Adrian LaPour were largely unknown. Now his lifelong best friend and girlfriend of 14 years are opening up about who we lost.

A photograph captures two things that Adrian LaPour cherished most in his life: his job at Nebraska Railcar Cleaning Service and his girlfriend of over 14 years, Marcella Schwartz. Pointing to the "I love you" spray-painted on the car -- sent to her.

"He said, 'Be careful driving to work. I love you. I will talk to you later.' And that's the last thing I heard from him," Schwartz said. "I'll miss him dearly but I can say that he did die doing something he loved because he talked about his job all the time. He never had anything ill to say about them," Schwartz said.

Through tears and the best words she can muster, through the emotion, Schwartz is forced to come to grips with how LaPour died. "His coworker Joe heard him hollering, 'there is no ladder, there is no ladder,'" Schwartz said.

There was an explosion in the railcar. LaPour, Dallas Foulk and Joseph Coschka were working on Tuesday. It killed LaPour and Foulk.

"I was trying to believe that he died instantaneously and he didn't have any pain and to find out..." Schwartz said. Coschka said he heard LaPour's cries for help after the blast.

Understandably it's been a rough past few days for Schwartz and childhood friend Mike MacAfee leaning on family and each other in dealing with the loss.

"If it is foreseen that that could be possibly happen then you would need to take the precautions to see that everybody could get out safe," MacAfee said.

And yet it's family they say that LaPour was all about. LaPour leaves behind a son, his parents and a sister and brother.

The investigation into the cause of the blast is under way but Coschka told our Mike McKnight that a spark from a shovel being used to scrape away sludge most likely caused the explosion.

Former railcar cleaning company employees say safety often ignored

By **Kevin Boughton**. CREATED Apr 15, 2015

OMAHA, Neb. (KMTV) - In the wake of a deadly explosion involving employees of the Nebraska Railcar Cleaning Service, former employees of the company have contacted various media outlets to share stories of what they call a pattern and culture of ignoring safety rules.

Dallas Foulk and Adrian Lapour died Tuesday after an explosion in the railcar they were working to clean.

Cody Naber, 22, says he worked for the company for two months. He says he worked on crews assigned to clean chemicals out of railcar tankers. "I personally watched people smoke inside the car. I watched people do all kinds of stuff they weren't supposed to be doing inside the car." Naber says crews were trained not to smoke while working near dangerous and flammable materials.

When he took his concerns to his supervisors, Naber says he was dismissed and told to trust the actions of employees who were hired before him. "I contacted my manager; I said 'Hey, this is what is going on in this car' and his response was 'They know what they're doing they've been here longer.'"

Investigators have not said if the two men killed in the explosion were doing anything against safety regulations. At the time of the accident OSHA was already investigating other claims of safety violations at Nebraska Railcar Cleaning Services said OSHA Area Director Bonita Winningham. She said the company was also cited multiple times in 2013, "We actually issued citations for confined space entry for issues we found at the site."

Another former employee, Patrick Rogers, says the company typically hires men just out of jail such as him and Nabers. He says he met Adrian Lapour while serving time in Douglas County jail.

Nabers and Rogers say they were fired earlier this year. "If we were just looking to cause trouble for the company, we'd have called OSHA a long time ago," Rogers said.