Second worker dies from tanker explosion injuries, police chief says

Chief: Friday's tanker explosion leaves 2 dead, 4 injured in south Bexar County

By Adrian Garcia - Digital Journalist
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SAN ANTONIO - The rail tanker explosion in south Bexar County on Friday has now resulted in the deaths of two workers.

Several workers with Cru Railcar Services were cleaning out crude oil residue inside the rail tanker when an explosion happened at the Alamo Junction Rail Park, which is in the 12500 block of Old Corpus Christi Road.

Officials said Gary Garza, 39, was found trapped inside the rail tanker and was pronounced dead at the scene.

A second worker, who was airlifted in critical condition with severe burns and a cable impaled into his side, died Monday night at Brooke Army Medical Center, Elmendorf police Chief Marco Pena said.

He was identified as Roger Noriega, 42, Pena said.

The four other workers who were injured in the explosion have since been released from the hospital, Pena said.

Pena said officials with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration were investigating the incident Monday and are continuing to look into what may have caused the deadly explosion.

Cru Railcar Services sent the following statement to KSAT.com:
"As you all know, there was a tragic incident at our Alamo Junction facility on May 10th. We are currently conducting an investigation and are cooperating with all of the authorities. At this point, our thoughts and prayers are for our employees and their families."

Friends support family of rail yard worker killed in explosion

by Robert Price - Wednesday, May 15th 2019

SAN ANTONIO - Friends are rallying around the family of a local rail yard worker taken off life support this week following last Friday’s tanker explosion in south Bexar County.

Roger Noriega, 42, was the second worker to die from the explosion, impaled by a cable and seriously burned while cleaning out the fuel tank of a railcar at Alamo Junction Rail Park just north of Elmendorf.
"Roger was very caring and very loving," said close friend Daniela Coffee. "His priority in life was taking care of his family, and no man should have to die providing for their family."

Now Roger’s wife Lucy and 10-year-old son Roger Jr. are facing a life without him.

"They're devastated," said Daniela. "They're immobile."

A longtime photographer and motorcycle mechanic, Roger took on work cleaning rail tankers with Cru Railcar Services.

"He knew he was in a dangerous situation," said Daniela. "Of course his concern was always, 'What about my family?'"

On the afternoon of May 10th, Roger and several other workers were cleaning crude oil residue from one of the rail tankers when it exploded, shooting flames thirty feet in the air.

"Police called me and they said something exploded," said Flor Lira on the day of the fire. Her son Gary Garza, 39, was trapped in the tanker and died at the scene.

Roger was flown to the hospital in critical condition.

"He had burns over 60 percent of his body," said Daniela. "His lungs were compromised. Everything. His organs were failing."

Roger remained on life support for the next two days.

"We were hopeful," said Daniela. "But he hung on until Sunday around midnight."

Coffee had known Roger since they were both students at Kazen Middle School and South San High School. Now she's helping raise money for his family, both online and in person.

"He supported his friends, he supported the community, and now it's our turn," she said.

On Saturday the 18th, Roger's friends will be holding a fundraiser at Next Day Custom Tees on South Presa from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m.
You can also learn more about his GoFundMe page by clicking here.

The cause of the explosion remains under investigation.