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8 Sections
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Two die in Mounds View blast

THE SURVIVOR



Diane Balk

It was 4:44 a.m. Tuesday and the only person moving on Long Lake Rd. in Mounds View was Diane Balk, making the rounds on her newspaper route.

She stopped at the first house on the left, grabbed a copy of the paper and opened the door of her '77 Chevette. An explosion split the stillness and the world turned to flame.

"The whole street was lit up," she said. "There was fire all up and down Long Lake Rd." Desperate, she thought, "I've got to get out of here." Still clutching the newspaper, she ran through a wall of fire.

The flames burned her face, arms, legs and back and singed her clothes, but she made it through. Balk, 47, is in serious condition at Hennepin County Medical Center.



Staff Photo by Charles Bjorjan
One firefighter doused another early Tuesday in Mounds View to provide relief from the intense heat of a fire caused by several explosions from a leaking underground gas line.

THE VICTIMS



Beverly and Jennifer Spano

When the explosion shook their house on Woodcrest Dr. in Mounds View Tuesday morning, Bev and Don Spano's first thought was to get the kids out.

Don grabbed Alison, 8, and ran to safety out the back door toward the pond behind their house.

Bev got Jenny, 7, and darted out the front door.

They got as far as the driveway when the wall of fire came racing around the corner from Long Lake Rd.

It flashed down the street and the air exploded in flames, enveloping them in a fireball of vaporized gasoline that burned over 98 percent of their bodies.

Bev Spano, 35, died at 10:07 a.m. at St. Paul-Ramsey Medical Center. Jenny died there exactly an hour later.

Fire was 'like a flamethrower'

The explosions tore apart the sleeping Mounds View neighborhood at 4:44 a.m. Tuesday. Manhole covers blew out of the ground, spewing sparks and fire like giant blowtorches. Walls of flame later than utility poles flashed down the streets, melting power lines and mailboxes. Trucks burst into flames and leaves wilted.

Terrified residents wearing pajamas and robes ran from their homes, bewildered by the explosions from the Williams Co. pipeline that most hadn't realized was under their neighborhood.

Bev Spano, 35, and her daughter,

Jennifer, 7, were burned when they were caught in their driveway by the fireball. Newspaper carrier Diane Balk, 47, received serious burns when her car was enveloped and gutted by the fireball.

More than 200 people were evacuated from their homes, power was cut off to 1,450 residents and natural gas service was stopped to the 15 houses closest to the explosion.

Williams officials refused to speculate yesterday on the cause of the accident or on how much gasoline was spilled.

The Mounds View City Council held

Inside /
■ A look at Williams Pipe Line Co. and its record. Page 11A.
■ Mounds View officials cope with an emergency. Page 10A.
■ More photographs. 10, 11A.

An emergency meeting yesterday morning and passed an ordinance ordering Williams to keep the pipeline shut down until the city receives assurances that it is safe.

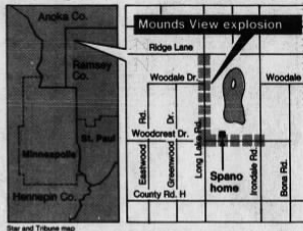
"The city of Mounds View is not pleased," said Don Pasley, city clerk-administrator, whose daughter

was a friend of Jennifer Spano. "Williams Pipe Line Co. will feel the full wrath of the community. This was not an act of God."

The first hint of trouble was picked up at 4:21 a.m. hundreds of miles away from the Mounds View neighborhood when workers at the Williams supervisory control center in Tulsa, Okla., noticed a drop in pressure on the line.

By 4:25 a.m., officials had confirmed the pressure drop in the Roseville station. They closed the valve that pumps gasoline through the line

Fire continued on page 10A



Report urges reconsideration of five utilities cases

By Joe Rignert and Erle Black
Staff Writers

The Minnesota Department of Public Service called Tuesday for reconsideration of five utilities cases, including four involving Northwestern Bell Telephone Co. because of job loss fears among members of the state's Public Utilities Commission (PUC) and company officials.

After a four-month investigation, the department said the cases were "unusual" when two PUC members voted on them while they were negotiating for jobs, and a third failed to disclose that he had worked for Bell before joining the PUC.

In one case, if the PUC were to overturn its decision as recommended by the report, it could order re-

unds of as much as \$1.5 million in commuters who bought telephones that had been leased from Bell.

The other cases involved issues between Bell and other telephone companies and one small rate increase for a non-Bell phone company.

PUC Chairman Harry Crump, noting that all three commissioners cited

for potential conflicts had left the commission, said it will assign the report to its staff for analysis and begin next month to consider the department's recommendations.

None of the cases recommended for reconsideration involved close votes and most were small matters compared with multimillion-dollar rate cases decided by the commission.

In a written statement, Bell said the most significant finding of the report was that no laws or PUC regulations had been violated.

The department study gave new details on the role of Bell's top executive in hiring a former PUC member. It said frequent Bell social contacts with commissioners increased when they were considering Bell

cases, and called for an investigation of whether Bell used law firms to pay consultants, as it did in the case of one former PUC member.

The department represents ratepayers in cases before the PUC. Among the specific findings of the study:
PUC continued on page 16A

Naval pioneer Hyman Rickover dies

New York Times

Washington, D.C.
Adm. Hyman G. Rickover, 86, the crusty and outspoken naval officer who became the father of the nuclear Navy, died Tuesday morning at his home in Arlington, Va.

The admiral served as an officer for 63 years, longer than any other naval officer in American history.

In his career Rickover generated controversy on all sides. He attacked Naval bureaucracy, ignored red tape, incensed those he considered stupid, bullied subordinates and as-

sailed the country's educational system.

And he achieved, in the production of the nuclear-powered submarine in the early 1950s, what former Navy Secretary Dan Kimball called "the most important piece of development work in the history of the Navy."

Rickover said upon his retirement that both nuclear weapons and nuclear power should be outlawed. "I'm not proud of the part I played," he said.

Rickover continued on page 17A



Hyman G. Rickover

Inside today's newspaper /

Severe quake shakes California / 3A

Stock index slides 18.27 points / 3M

FDA bans some sulfite use / 8A

Jacobs wants to raze brewery / 1B

Scruggs denies role in slaying / 1B

Almanac

Wednesday, July 9, 1986
190th day; 175 to go this year
Sunrise: 5:35. Sunset: 9:01.

Today's weather /
What more could you ask?

It will be mostly sunny and pleasant today, with a high in the low 80s.

Business 17M Movies 7C
Comics 80C Obituaries 10B
Corrections 3A TV, Radio 10C
Crossword 11C Variety 112C
Editorial 1B, 18A Weather 2B
Want Ads 8M, 9-19D

Inferno in Mounds View

Minneapolis Star and Tribune Wed., July 9, 1986 . . 10A

Private pain, public duty dogged city manager

By Jim Parsons Staff Writer

The first time Don Pauley muttered a prayer under his breath was when he learned that gasoline pouring out of the ruptured pipeline had gotten into the storm sewer.

Oh my God, he thought, fires could break out everywhere, including near his house, where the sewer dumps out.

"Don't let that happen," he thought.

Pauley, Mounds View's city manager, then turned to Police Chief Tim Ramacher and told him all nearby houses had to be evacuated. Ramacher agreed and issued the necessary orders.

But Pauley didn't wait for someone to evacuate his block. He got in his car and drove home, pausing only briefly to tell a group of neighbors on the street corner to leave the area immediately.

He yelled at his wife to take the kids to her parents' house in St. Paul. Then he headed for city hall. There were a ton of things to do. The cops needed barricades. Traffic had to be kept out of the area to avoid traffic jams. The City Council needed to meet to deal with what might be a massive disaster.

For the next four hours, Pauley was making calls, attending meetings, making more calls, getting reports from the scene and making more calls. He listed the names of the people who were injured but things were so hectic that the names didn't register.

At 10 a.m., he got a few moments so he called his wife, Peggy. She said that it was Bev Spano and her daughter, Jenny, that had been severely burned.

In a low voice, Peggy Pauley told him that Wendy, their 7-year-old daughter, was supposed to have spent the night with Jenny but didn't because she had to get up early to get to summer school.

Pauley also talked to his daughter on the phone. "Jenny can't come to my roller-skating party tonight because she's hurt," Wendy said.

"I know," said Pauley, not knowing what else to say.

After hanging up, Pauley was again agitated by phone calls. One call informed him that Bev and Jenny Spano had died.

That made him angry. Angry that such a thing could happen to someone who was close to his daughter and angry that it could happen to his town, his community.

He didn't feel very charitable toward the pipeline's owners, and let his feelings show during the first press conference of the day. But he, along with the council and city attorney, dealt calmly with the company's officers at city hall before a second press conference.

Then there was time to go home, shave and ditch his jeans and Mounds View arts festival T-shirt for his normal business suit. From there, it was back to another meeting and a quick hamburger with Mayor Jerry Luke and Council Member Barbara Blanke, then more questions at city hall.

"I haven't seen anything like it since I was in the service and I saw a plane crash and there was gasoline all over," he said. "I thought everything was going to go up in flames." Blak ran from her flame-encircled car to the nearest house, pounded on the door and rang the bell until Judy Strac let her in.

Strac held Blak's hands, pink with burns, under the kitchen faucet and then took her to an artificial pond set back until the ambulance arrived and sped her off to Hennepin County Medical Center.

"I'm thankful I'm alive," said Blak, 47, who is in serious condition with second-degree burns over 27 percent of her body.



The break in the pipeline caused this hole in the pavement on Long Lake Rd. in Mounds View. Firefighters used sand to contain the fire.



Area fire chief Ron Fagerstrom, center, huddled with Williams Pipe Line officials about two blocks from the explosion site.



Newspapers continued to burn inside Diane Blak's car after the explosion. Blak was in serious condition last night at Hennepin County Medical Center.

FIRE: Gasoline pooled underground, then surfaced

Continued from page 1A

toward Wrenshall, Minn., near Duluth, and began looking for the leak.

But gas continued to leak from the pipeline break at the intersection of Woodcrest Dr. and Long Lake Rd. The gasoline pooled underground, then bubbled to the surface, where it spilled into a two-block stretch of street gutters and storm sewers.

By the time Blak turned into Long Lake Rd. to deliver the Minneapolis Star and Tribune, the neighborhood was a bomb waiting to explode.

City officials speculated that it was the best from Blak's 1977 auto that ignited the gasoline, sending flames through the neighborhood.

"It was like being in a flamethrower or out there," said Ron Fagerstrom, fire chief for Mounds View, Blaine and Spring Lake Park. "Flames got higher than the electrical poles. That was the intensity of the fire."

"It literally scared the hell out of me," said Morris Sprung, who lives on Long Lake Rd. He said he thought a plane had crashed when he saw flames as high as the trees outside his windows early yesterday.

"I haven't seen anything like it since I was in the service and I saw a plane crash and there was gasoline all over," he said. "I thought everything was going to go up in flames."

Blak ran from her flame-encircled car to the nearest house, pounded on the door and rang the bell until Judy Strac let her in.

Strac held Blak's hands, pink with burns, under the kitchen faucet and then took her to an artificial pond set back until the ambulance arrived and sped her off to Hennepin County Medical Center.

"I'm thankful I'm alive," said Blak, 47, who is in serious condition with second-degree burns over 27 percent of her body.

Meanwhile, the fireball raced around the corner and leapt to the Spano house, where it exploded. Bev and Jennifer, Bev Spano fell onto the driveway, screaming for help.

Her husband, Don, scooped Jenny up and ran with her to the pond. Neighbors asked if she wanted to rub her wounds, but she said she just wanted her mother. Others wrapped Bev in wet blankets.

Ambulances came racing up and took mother and daughter to Ramsey County Medical Center, where they both died.

Angie Carlson was driving through the area as the streets exploded. Carlson and her friend, Jodi Samson, were heading home after work about 4:45 a.m., when they heard a heavy clunk in their car.

A manhole had exploded, propelling its cover at the underside of the car, forcing it to the side of the road.

Before they could get out of the car, flames shot up from the manhole and down the sides of Long Lake Rd. in front of them.

They jumped out of the car, not stopping to turn off the ignition. A neighbor took them in and called 911.

The fire spread so quickly that "It was just like it walked right down the street," said Dick Elmer, who lives a few blocks away. "I was out here (at his window) in my shorts and I told my wife 'better get dressed. We're going to have to get out of here.'"

As word of the disaster spread, Pauley, who is also the city's civil defense director, helped with the neighborhood evacuation. Pauley's daughter, Wendy, was to have stayed overnight Monday with Jennifer Spano.

Firefighters from 12 communities and Ramsey County were called to the extragang the flames, which burned for more than two hours. By the time they arrived, flames were shooting 20 to 30 feet high and a

thick cloud of black smoke was beginning to drift over the city.

Fire crews filled the streets with foam and water to stop the fire. City officials shut down a well.

The evacuated residents gathered at a doughnut shop and in the parking lot of Mounds View City Hall, about a half mile away.

Maribel Schwinghammer and her family gathered at the doughnut shop on Hwy. 16 where they waited for 2 1/2 hours with 30 other residents, some in bare feet and bathrobes.

And some, like Schwinghammer, said they wanted some reassurance about the safety of the area.

"I have some concerns about living a block away from (the pipeline). I want to know that the officials in charge (of the pipeline) are able to handle this. I want some questions answered."

As the fire died down and emergency crews finished their work, they were replaced by investigators trying to piece together what went wrong and why.

Officials from the state Pollution Control Agency spent most of the day monitoring gas that spilled into sewer lines and drained into nearby Rice Creek, which flows into Hew Brighton's Long Lake. They worried that the spill might reach the Mississippi River and contaminate Minnesota's water supply. But those fears dissipated during the afternoon, as barriers soaked up the gasoline in Rice Creek and slowed its flow.

Traces of gasoline reached Friday's Locke Lake, which is part of the Rice Creek Watershed District, by about 4 p.m., but was moving slowly. Barriers were set up to divert water from the Minneapolis water facility.

The spill also took its toll on wildlife. Department of Natural Resources officials said last night that 18 ducks and six muskrats died in Rice Creek and Long Lake.

Williams officials also converged on the area, flying north from Tulsa to inspect the site and coordinate cleanup.

Crews excavated the damaged pipe, which should provide more clues about what caused the accident, said Stephen Cropper, president of Williams Companies, parent firm of Williams Pipe Line Co., based in Tulsa. About 40 feet of the pipe were wrapped in plastic to preserve any clues.

"We deeply regret that this accident has occurred," Cropper said at a press conference yesterday in Roseville. "Our heartfelt sympathy is extended to the Spano family."

Williams officials said they began to look for the source of the drop in line pressure before the explosion, but couldn't find it.

"We were not aware of the exact location of the spill until we got the fire alarm," said Gary Taggart, northern division manager for Williams Pipe Line in Roseville.

Williams officials said they could not speculate on how much gasoline was in the line at the time of the accident. The line, constructed in 1957 and last inspected in 1984, typically transports about 330,000 barrels of liquid fuel per month from Roseville to Wrenshall, Cropper said.

Federal investigators also arrived on the scene.

A four-person team from the National Transportation Safety Board flew to Minneapolis last night and will begin probing the accident today, said Michael Benson, public information officer. The team will be headed by John K. Laster, a presidential appointee to the board.

The U.S. Office of Pipeline Safety sent one of its investigators from Kansas City. The agency is charged with inspecting pipelines and investigating federal law violations for the U.S. Department of Transportation.

As city officials wrestled with cleanup, residents lined up in city hall for identification tags that would allow them to go back to their homes for an hour at a time. Most returned to their homes yesterday afternoon.

NSP restored power just before 6 a.m. to all of those customers except about 500 severed the explosion site. Fire officials had asked NSP to keep electrical service shut off in that area until further notice. An NSP spokesman said power was restored last night.

Cropper said Mounds View residents concerned about the safety of their homes should call Steven Thatcher with the city of Mounds View, 784-2655 (work), or 484-9159 (home). Residents who sustained property damage also were encouraged to call Thatcher.

After an impromptu meeting in front of one of the most damaged homes, representatives of the Mounds View City Council, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Ramsey County, the National Office of Pipeline Safety, Williams Pipe Line Co. and the state Legislature agreed yesterday evening to have a 40-foot section of the pipeline removed, wrapped in plastic and stored under police guard. The pipeline was plugged at the cut last night.

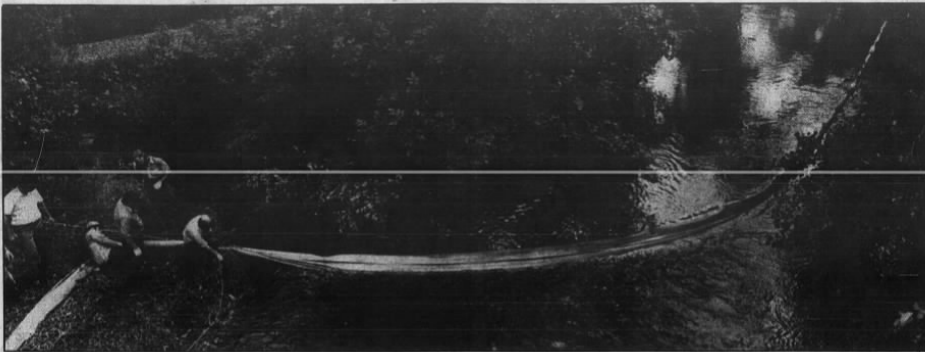
Dick Holmes of the Office of Pipeline Safety said it appeared the gas had burst through a seam in the pipe, but that the cause of the break would be determined after an investigation.

Officials were to meet again at the Mounds View city hall at 10 a.m. today to decide what to do with the pipeline, which the city and the MPCA use as legal evidence. State Rep. Dan Knuth, DFL-New Brighton, said they would also address when the pipeline, as well as Long Lake Road, might be repaired and reopened.

By staff writers Richard Meryebew, Elise Foley, Carol Byrnes, Paul Klemds and Bill McLaughlin.

Inferno in Mounds View

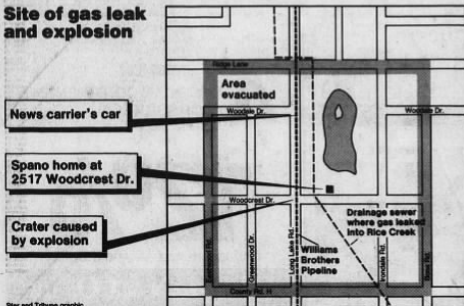
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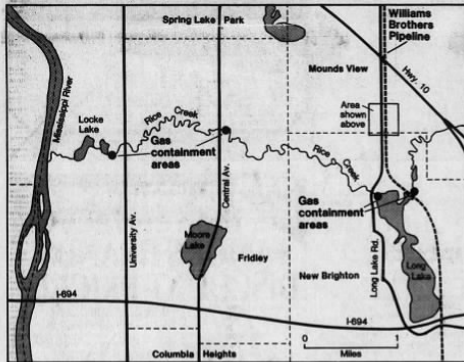
Staff Photo by John Croft

Crews pulled one of four booms across Rice Creek at University Av. Tuesday, slowing the flow of the spill. Pollution control officials had expressed concern that the spill could reach the Mississippi River.

Site of gas leak and explosion



Star and Tribune graphic



Williams tried to improve 'dismal' record of spills

By Paul Kleas Staff Writer

Before Tuesday's explosion in Mounds View, Williams Pipe Line Co. had been improving on what one state official called a "dismal" record of pipeline leaks and spills.

Since 1967, Williams' 1,400-mile network of pipelines in Minnesota has spilled nearly 1 billion gallons of various liquid fuels, in about 79 incidents. The company has paid \$100,000 in state penalties, including a \$142,500 payment for 31 spills. That payment, to Minnesota's "superfund," is the second-largest made by a firm charged with violating state environmental regulations.

More than half of the spills came from two old lines between Williams' facilities in Rosemount and Roseville, according to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA). An investigation by the U.S. Office of Pipeline Safety in 1981 led to the abandonment of one line two years later. The other was refurbished but is no longer used to transport fuels, the MPCA said.

Williams officials also said in 1983 that they spent \$4.8 million during the two previous years to recover spilled fuel in Minnesota and upgrade their pipeline and storage-tank system.

But those moves didn't preclude problems on the 153-mile line that passes through Mounds View on its course between Roseville and Superior, Wis. The line pumps fuel and gasoline primarily to customers in northeastern Minnesota and northwestern Wisconsin.

In December 1983, a rupture in the line spilled 8,000 gallons of gasoline near Staragon Lake in Pine County, threatening the nearby Kettle River. The leak was blamed on a combination of operator error and a defective weld seam. Williams agreed to pay \$30,000 to the state's superfund.

In November 1984, the line spilled 40,000 gallons of jet fuel in New Brighton. But the incident was blamed on a heavy-equipment operator and Williams was not penalized.

The 1984 spill was the sixth one on the line reported to the MPCA. The others involved a seam failure in 1982, a lightning strike in 1971, a weld failure in 1963, and a third-party break, usually caused by heavy equipment) in 1973. Mochkov said.

The 8-inch steel pipe, one of Williams' major lines, was installed in 1937. "This is really one of their sever lines," said Paul Hoff, director of the MPCA's information office.

The New Brighton incident prompted the Office of Pipeline Safety to test the line for potential flaws. By sending water through the line at higher-than-normal pressure, 15 trouble spots were discovered and repaired, said Jim Thomas, deputy director of the safety agency, based in Washington, D.C. Of the 15, five problems were found in the line between Roseville and Harris, Minn. Thomas termed the overall number of flaws "not uncommon" considering the rigorous nature of the test.

Williams' Minnesota pipelines have not been tested since the New Brighton incident, Thomas said. He conceded that his agency's staff is too small to conduct regular inspections. "Unless we have certain specific reasons to look at one segment (of a pipeline), we have to balance our resources," he said.

The Mounds View accident came after an explosion last week involving a Williams facility. Six workers were severely burned when a gasoline storage tank exploded in Millford, Minn. The workers were cleaning the empty, 2.3-million-gallon tank when

flames inside apparently exploded. The accident is being investigated by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

Williams officials postponed answering questions yesterday about the company's pipeline problems except for those dealing specifically with the Mounds View accident.

Williams is a subsidiary of the Williams Companies of Tulsa, Okla., which operates more than 8,500 miles of pipeline in 12 states. It has been operating in Minnesota for more than 50 years. Thomas called it the nation's second-largest transporter of liquid fuels.

Thomas said Williams' company-wide spill record was about average for pipeline firms nationwide. But he conceded that it previously was above average with its two 24-inch lines from Rosemount to Roseville.

"Up until mid-1983, the record of the company was dismal," Hoff said. Despite being the largest fuel transporter in the state, "they had what we would consider to be more than their share" of leaks and spills, he said.

The MPCA fined Williams \$17,500 in 1979 for 37 spills dating to 1967. Many stemmed from its Roseville-to-Rosemount line, which were built in the 1930s and were badly corroded.

They accounted for 36 spills between 1971, when the MPCA was formed, and 1983, when the line went out of service.

In April 1980, a gas explosion killed a man, injured three others, and caused \$3 million damage at Williams' Roseville facility. The explosion occurred just after workers finished installing a pump and started sending pressurized gas through it. The National Transportation Safety Board concluded that the accident could have been avoided with proper testing procedures.

In August 1983, Williams agreed to pay \$142,500 for spilling more than 800,000 gallons of fuel at 31 sites during the three previous years. The largest of those incidents was the spill of 280,000 gallons of fuel oil near Owatonna in February 1983. Williams recovered about 250,000 gallons, the MPCA said. Williams also agreed to a major program to prevent spills and conduct tests on suspect lines. The payment was the largest collected by the MPCA until it penalized American Crystal Sugar Co. \$197,000 in February 1985.

"Since that time, their performance has been as good as any pipeline company," Hoff said of Williams. "We'll just have to wait and see what comes out of this one."

2 who died devoted, popular in community

By Ready Furs and Bill McCallife Staff Writers

Friends, family members and employees described Bev Spano, 35, as a devoted mother with a fun-loving spirit, a religious person who was active in church, and a "super secretary."

Jenny Spano, 7, her daughter, was a first-grade student at Sunnyside Elementary School in the Mounds View school district, who was called a "very sweet girl" by Principal John Larson, and an avid learner who was always good-natured, said her teacher, Evelyn Pierce.

Bev Spano was pronounced dead at St. Paul-Ramsey Medical Center at 10:07 a.m. Tuesday and her daughter died an hour later from burns suffered when gasoline leaked from underground lines and exploded in Mounds View early yesterday.

Dr. Lynn Solem, director of the hospital's burn center, said yesterday that with third-degree burns over 100 percent of their bodies, there was no chance either could survive.

Family and friends in the burn-unit waiting room wept as word came about the death of one member of the family, then the other.

Rev. Fred Golke of Messiah Lutheran Church in Mounds View, the family pastor, consoled the family. He said later he was "overwhelmed with the tragedy that has happened."

Meanwhile, at Hennepin County Medical Center, Diane Heik, 47, lay in a burn unit, large bandages covering her hands and arms. There she was burned on her back and blisters on her face.

Heik said she had been a carrier for the Minneapolis Star and Tribune for about five years, in addition to being a cafeteria helper in the food service department at Ironside High School.

She described herself as "frightened and scared" as she ran through flames from the car she had been using to deliver papers in yesterday's early-morning hours.

"This is an incredibly lucky woman," said Dr. John Twomey, director of the hospital's burn unit. "She could have been much more seriously burned than she was and hopefully she will recover without too much long-term problems."

Bev Spano was still conscious and her daughter was in and out of consciousness when they arrived at St. Paul-Ramsey. "She was very aware of how critical she was," said Carolyn Kuehn, head nurse of the burn unit.

Bev Spano grew up in Brooklyn Center, graduated from Robbinsdale High School and was married in 1972. She was a room mother in her children's elementary school, helping with student activities, active in a Brownie troop that one daughter belonged to, and was a Sunday school teacher in her church.

She also was a secretary in the office of three orthopedic surgeons in Fridley. Dr. Paul Patterson, one of the surgeons, called her "an exceptional typist and transcriber" and "a super secretary."

Sandy Gervais, Plymouth, a close friend, said that her family and the Spano family watched fireworks together last Friday in Blaine. "She was a good friend," Gervais said. "If you had a problem, you could always talk to her about it. . . . She was a good mom. She liked to teach her kids responsibility. . . . I'm sick with grief."



Staff Photo by Charles Björger

Neighborhood residents gathered to watch cleanup efforts near the area of the explosion.