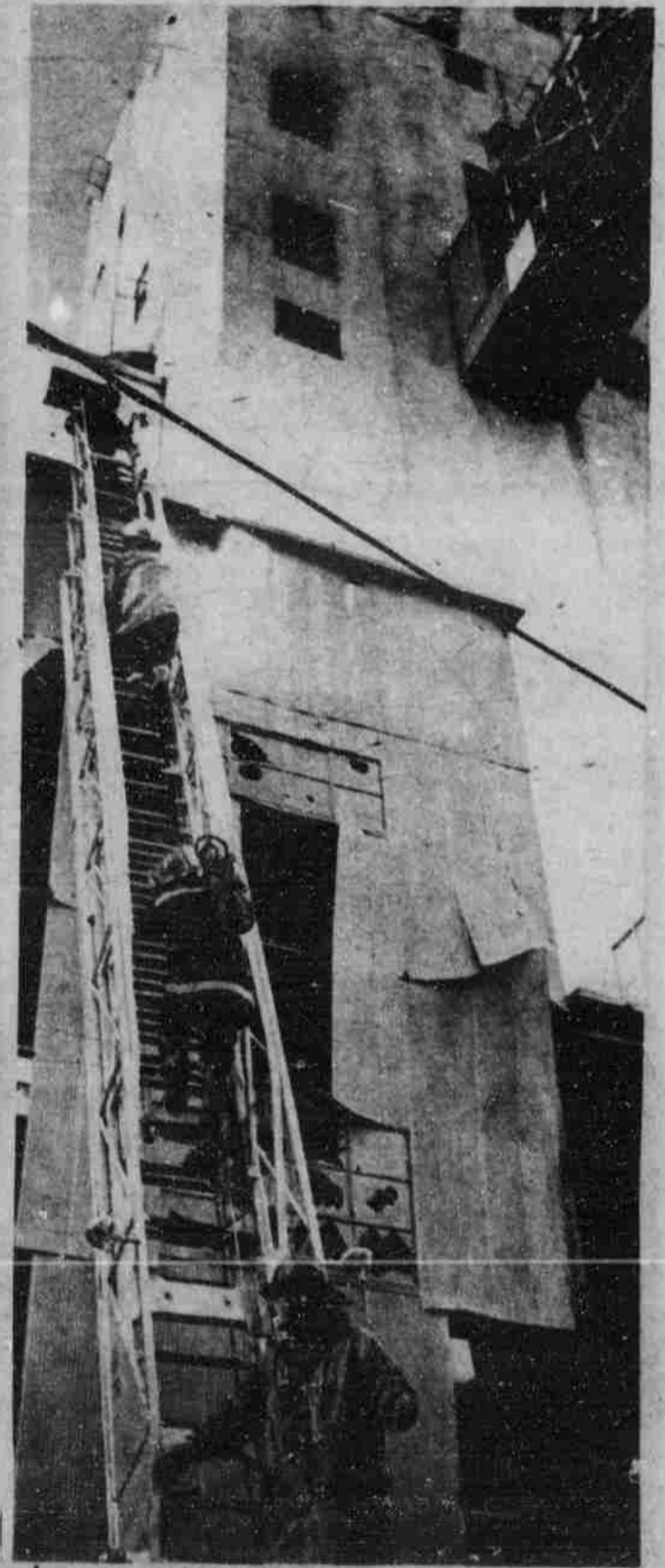


Top right: To get into the elevator to recover the injured, firemen had to climb the building where trucks are unloaded, and raise ladders to a window in the elevator. Fire Chief Dallas Johnson said he thought they would have to use a helicopter to remove the injured. Later, he said, firemen were able to work their way up the inside of the elevator.

Center right: Firemen climbed the unloading building to gain entry to the conveyor room where the injured persons were. In the upper right corner is a catwalk on which one of the injured called to firemen for help.

Bottom: Seconds after the explosion at the Far-Mar-Co elevator, smoke billowed several hundred feet into the air in a mushroom cloud.

Center left: One of the first men recovered after the explosion is loaded in an ambulance to be taken to the St. Elizabeth Burn Center.



Explosion, fire, rescue

Four persons were critically injured Thursday afternoon in an explosion at the Far-Mar-Co grain elevator at 24th and Fair streets, according to a Lincoln Fire Dept. official.

A fifth person, Terry Praeuner, was reported injured by the department, but Jack Stiles, executive director of St. Elizabeth Community Health Center, said Praeuner was not admitted to the hospital. All of the injured were taken to St. Elizabeth.

The injured included: William Palmer, Lincoln, Don Brinkman, Palmyra, Francis Kreifels, Lincoln and Michael Murphy, a truck driver from North Bend.

Another truck driver, Ervin Fueher, was admitted to St. Elizabeth's and later released.

Jerry Frazier, inspector for the department's fire prevention bureau, said the explosion occurred about 5:12 p.m. in the lower levels of the building housing the conveyor belt.

Two of the injured were trapped for about an hour and one-half in the conveyor room of the 140 ft. concrete structure, Frazier said.

Three other plant employees in the building at the time of the explosion were not injured.

The cause of the two-alarm explosion was not known immediately and currently is under investigation, Frazier said. He said the inside of the room was filled with smoldering grain dust when firemen and police arrived, but was not burning.

One eyewitness said that, "Two foot chunks of concrete were blasted several hundred feet from the elevator." He said that huge concrete slabs which had been in the elevator walls were scattered near the building or dangling loosely from wire meshing.

He said small fires were continuing late Thursday night.

Frazier estimated the damage to the elevator at between \$3 million and \$4 million, and said the building, owned by Far-Mar-Co Inc. of Hatcher, Kansas, was insured for \$2,295,000.



Top photos by John Kalkowski

Bottom photo by Rod Cushing