Fire Extinguishers Fatality File

Exploding fire extinguisher kills contractor working at Manhattan postal facility

A fire extinguisher exploded at a Chelsea postal facility Wednesday, killing a contractor working there, authorities said.

The freak explosion took place on the fourth floor of the Morgan General Mail Facility on Ninth Ave. near W. 29th St. about 8:15 a.m., officials said. “It sounded like a bomb,” said Noel Tlatelpa, a witness who works down the block from the facility. “Then it was all chaos.”

A 35-year-old contractor working in the building was hit in the neck with shrapnel and died at the scene, officials said. His name was not immediately released. “He was messing with the fire extinguisher on the fourth floor and it exploded,” said one postal employee, who wished not to be named. “They brought him out of the front. He looked like he was dead.”

A 26-year-old colleague of the victim suffered a deep cut to his right arm and was taken to Bellevue Hospital, officials said. Meanwhile, an NYPD squad car racing to the scene T-boned a vehicle at W. 25th St. and Ninth Ave.

Medics took the woman driving the struck vehicle to Bellevue Hospital, where she was treated for minor injuries, officials said. The two officers in the squad car were taken to Lenox Hill Hospital, also with minor injuries.

All three were put on stretchers but were talking with medics as they were loaded onto ambulances, witnesses said. A Postal Service spokesman said no postal employees were injured in the explosion

and mail service was not disrupted.