Unloading corn during explosion

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
Friday, 07 January 2011 15:02 -

Rubenthaler: 'It was scary.'

Shortly before noon on Wednesday, Dec. 29, Dirk Rubenthaler pulled his semi-trailer truck underneath All Points Cooperative elevator to unload corn.

The time was nearing 11:45 a.m. when the front half of the semi load had been emptied into the elevator's dump pit.

Rubenthaler had just moved the truck ahead to unload the second half when he saw a flame shoot in front of him outside the elevator door.
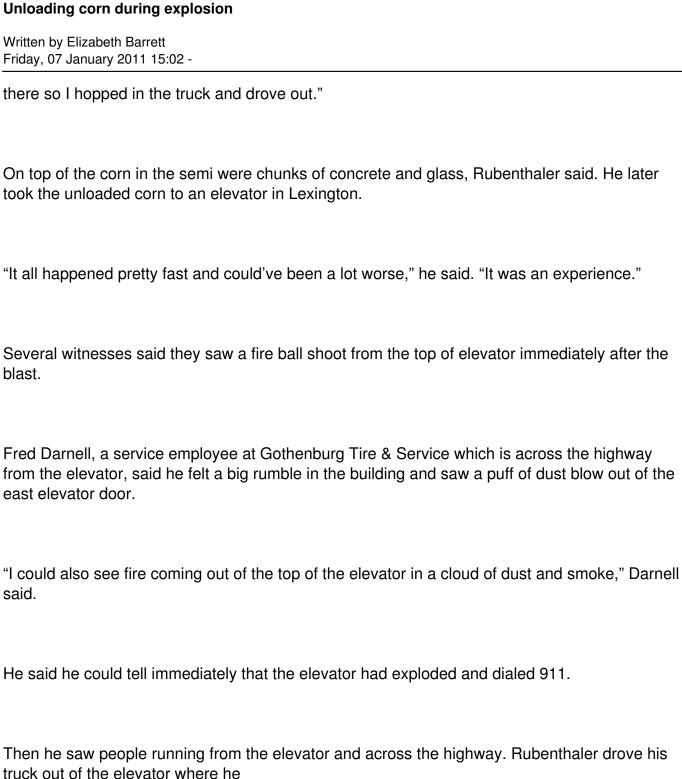
"I then heard an explosion that shook the truck," Rubenthaler said, noting he sat there for a few seconds because the smoke and dust were so thick he couldn't see. "I didn't know what to do."

However he said he knew the elevator had exploded.

"It was scary."

The 51-year-old corn farmer and rancher then got out of the cab to see if All Points employee Jeremy Puryear, who had been helping him unload, was all right.

"The blast had pushed him out the west door," Rubenthaler said. "He waved at me to get out of

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there so I hopped in the truck and drove out.”

On top of the corn in the semi were chunks of concrete and glass, Rubenthaler said. He later took the unloaded corn to an elevator in Lexington.

“It all happened pretty fast and could've been a lot worse,” he said. “It was an experience.”

Several witnesses said they saw a fire ball shoot from the top of elevator immediately after the blast.

Fred Darnell, a service employee at Gothenburg Tire & Service which is across the highway from the elevator, said he felt a big rumble in the building and saw a puff of dust blow out of the east elevator door.

“I could also see fire coming out of the top of the elevator in a cloud of dust and smoke,” Darnell said.

He said he could tell immediately that the elevator had exploded and dialed 911.

Then he saw people running from the elevator and across the highway. Rubenthaler drove his truck out of the elevator where he

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