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Two hospitalized in Bucoda blast

BY KEVIN KALHOEFER

THE OLYMPIAN

BUCODA -- Two men were taken to burn centers in Tacoma and Seattle with second- and third-degree burns after a gasoline tank exploded at a Bucoda scrap yard.

□ The explosion happened after 10 a.m. at S&S Salvage on Sumner Street. The scrap yard's owner, Leo Sanders Jr., his brother, Tim Sanders, and Leo Sanders' son, Leo Sanders III, were cutting iron to make room for an old Ford truck in the yard. The three were unaware of a gasoline tank nearby.

"I figure a spark from our cutting must have caused the explosion," Tim Sanders said.

He said he immediately bent over when the explosion happened and felt the heat on his back. Apart from some singed hair, he was not severely affected by the explosion.

"I was close, but thank God I was far enough away that I only felt the heat of it," he said.

Linda Shaw, whose home sits adjacent to the scrap yard, was in her car in her driveway when she heard the explosion.

"It literally picked me off of my car seat," she said. "I went running back there, and they told me to call 9-1-1."

She said she saw flames shooting up after the explosion.

The father and son suffered second- and third-degree burns on 40 percent of their bodies, said Doug Meier, a firefighter and paramedic with the Grand Mound Rochester Fire Department.

Shaw said both were conscious and able to walk when she saw them.

"They looked like they were in shock, to tell you the truth," she said.

Leo Sanders III was airlifted to Harborview Medical Center in Seattle. Leo Sanders Jr. was taken to Saint Joseph Medical Center in Tacoma.

"The second helicopter was 45 minutes away. It makes more sense to get the victims moving," Meier said, adding that ground transportation gives medics more operating room than a helicopter.

Meier said the son did not appear to have critical injuries.

The father's injuries were potentially critical because he might have suffered burns in his airway, Meier said.

Leo Sanders III was in serious condition in intensive care Friday night, according to a spokesperson for Harborview.

No information on Leo Sanders Jr. was available Friday night.

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Jason Hunter/The Olympian

Tim Sanders stands next to the wreckage from an explosion Friday at S&S Salvage in Bucoda. Sanders was at the salvage yard when a gasoline tank exploded; his brother and nephew were hospitalized with second- and third-degree burns.

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