

# Officials say refinery blast kills 3, injures 12

By The Associated Press

**LAKE CHARLES** — An explosion and fire killed three people at the Citgo Petroleum Corp. refinery near Lake Charles, officials said today.

Citgo officials in Tulsa, Okla., and Lake Charles confirmed three deaths. It was unclear whether all three bodies had been recovered late this morning.

There were 12 injuries reported, at least four of them involving serious burns.

One body was found early today, Citgo spokesman Bob Davidson said in Lake Charles.

Davidson said seven Citgo employees and five contract workers were injured. At least two were treated at the plant's infirmary for minor injuries. Hospitals reported today that one man was in guarded condition, three in critical condition and six were treated and released.

Officials said the explosion occurred about 11 p.m. Sunday in the catalytic cracker, which is used in the refining stage. The fire burned itself out early today, they said.

"When I got there at about a quarter after 11, the fire

was taller than the flare stacks. I'm talking billowing flames, a massive tower of smoke. I was a quarter-mile away and the heat was hitting me," said Jay Zimmer, a reporter for KVHP-TV in Lake Charles.

Eight people were taken to West Calcasieu-Cameron Hospital. One was in guarded condition this morning, five were treated and released and two taken to burn units at other hospitals, spokeswoman Pam McGough said.

"We thought at first there were 10, but two were taken on to St. Patrick's," she said.

A spokesman at St. Patrick's Hospital in Lake Charles said Jim Flowers, 41, was released after treatment for minor burns on his face and arms, and David East, 20, was flown to LSU Medical Center's burn center. "We've just got a report he is very critical, with burns over 95 percent of his body," Kim Vogel said.

LSU Medical Center in Shreveport said it was treating two patients, both in critical condition. Baton Rouge General Hospital was treating one man in very critical condition. Hospital spokesman Bob Johannessen identified the man as Daryl Wayne Dowers, 31, no address available. He had second- and third-degree burns over 90

percent of his body, Johannessen said.

Davidson said damage at the plant, which is in an industrial area about five miles southwest of Lake Charles on La. 108, could not immediately be determined.

"The unit itself is still standing . . . It just looks black and charred now," he said. None of the outer walls was blown out, he said.

Davidson said pipelines to the unit were closed off to help extinguish the blaze. The company asked all area emergency units for assistance, he said.

A state police hazardous materials unit from Lafayette was at the scene, said Sgt. David Thompson.

Thompson said residents near the plant said the blast shook their homes, although there was no immediate word of damage. The nearest houses are about a mile from the plant.

A thundering explosion that shattered windows 20 miles away tore through a Shell refinery at Norco, La. on May 5, 1988, leaving seven dead and 19 injured. That explosion and fire occurred in the plant's catalytic cracker unit.