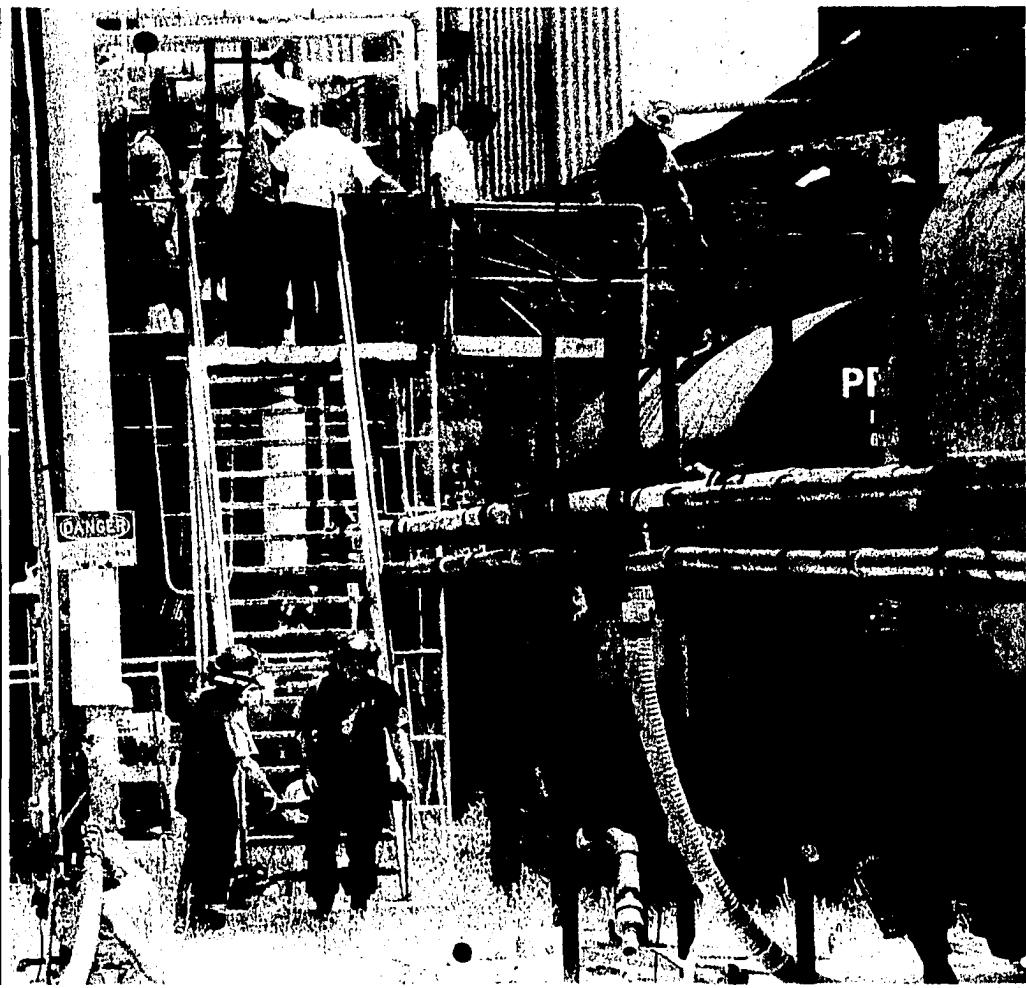


## 12 hospitalized after chlorine gas leak

Greene, Deborah I

The Sun (1837-); Aug 8, 1986; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Baltimore Sun  
pg. 1C



THE SUN/EDWIN REINBERG

Firefighters investigate chlorine leak in a railroad tank car at Delta Chemical Corp.

# 12 hospitalized after chlorine gas leak

By Deborah I. Greene

Twelve chemical company employees were hospitalized yesterday, one with serious injuries, after they inhaled chlorine vapors that escaped from a ruptured tank hose and briefly caused a gray cloud to rise above the Curtis Bay industrial area, Baltimore fire officials said.

They said the chemical cloud that formed after the 12:25 p.m. accident traveled north more than a mile and a half, mostly over the Patapsco River, before dissipating near Fort McHenry.

"It was gray. It would have been green if it contained a lot of chlorine," said Capt. Patrick Flynn, Fire Department spokesman.

Workers at the Cannery Avenue plant of the Delta Chemical Corp. near Wagners Point complained that

*“Chlorine inhalation at a high concentration and direct exposure could be fatal, but those are much higher concentrations than we found today.”*

**RAY FELDMAN**  
Office of Environmental Programs

they felt ill after about 50 gallons of liquid chlorine escaped before a foreman could shut off a valve to a corroded pressurized hose that ruptured, Captain Flynn said. The hose was attached to a railroad tank car.

The 12 who were hospitalized — some in South Baltimore General Hospital and others in University of Maryland Hospital — were treated for breathing difficulties and eye and skin irritations. Several of the victims remained overnight for observation, hospital officials said.

Among the victims was 33-year-old Charles Clark, who was listed last night in serious condition in University of Maryland Hospital.

Also at University were Stanley Southerland, 26, and David Golaby, 28, both listed in stable condition. Officials at the hospital said four others, Richard Whitaker, 21; David Moral, 28; Larry Gibson, 32, and Gregory Spenser, 29, were to be released.

Five employees of the plant were

**See CHLORINE, 3C, Col. 1**

# 'Cloud' of chlorine sends 12 from chemical firm hospital

## CHLORINE, from 1C

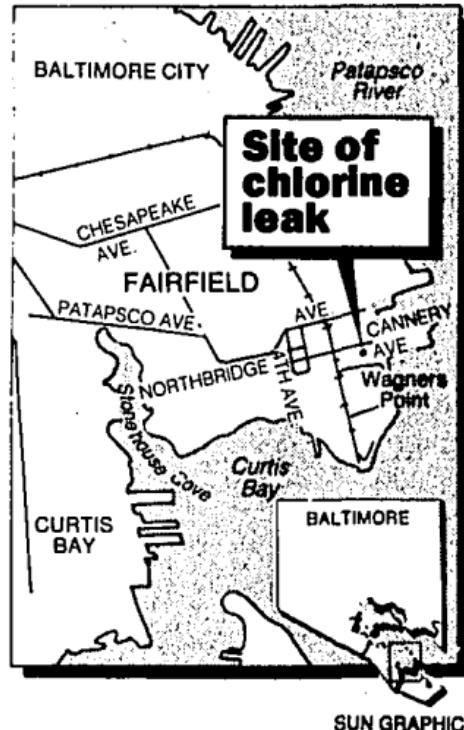
taken to South Baltimore General Hospital. They were Richard Scott, 31; Donald Southerland, 23; Ronald Taylor, 22; Danny Bolton, 26, and Jack Southerland, 24. All five were listed in stable condition.

"It was a very minor escape" of chlorine, Capt. Flynn said of the accident.

"It [the cloud] dissipated very quickly," said Ray Feldmann, a spokesman for the Maryland Office of Environmental Programs. "Because the cloud went over the Patapsco River, there was no contamination of the residential area."

No houses were evacuated.

"Chlorine inhalation at a high concentration and direct exposure could be fatal, but those are much higher concentrations than we found today," said Mr. Feldmann.



# Cause of chlorine leak hunted

*August 19*

LEAK, From D1

Safety operators immediately shut off the pipe's gas valve, while workers reached for emergency air tanks to escape the noxious fumes, a Delta spokesperson said. The leak was contained by 1 p.m.

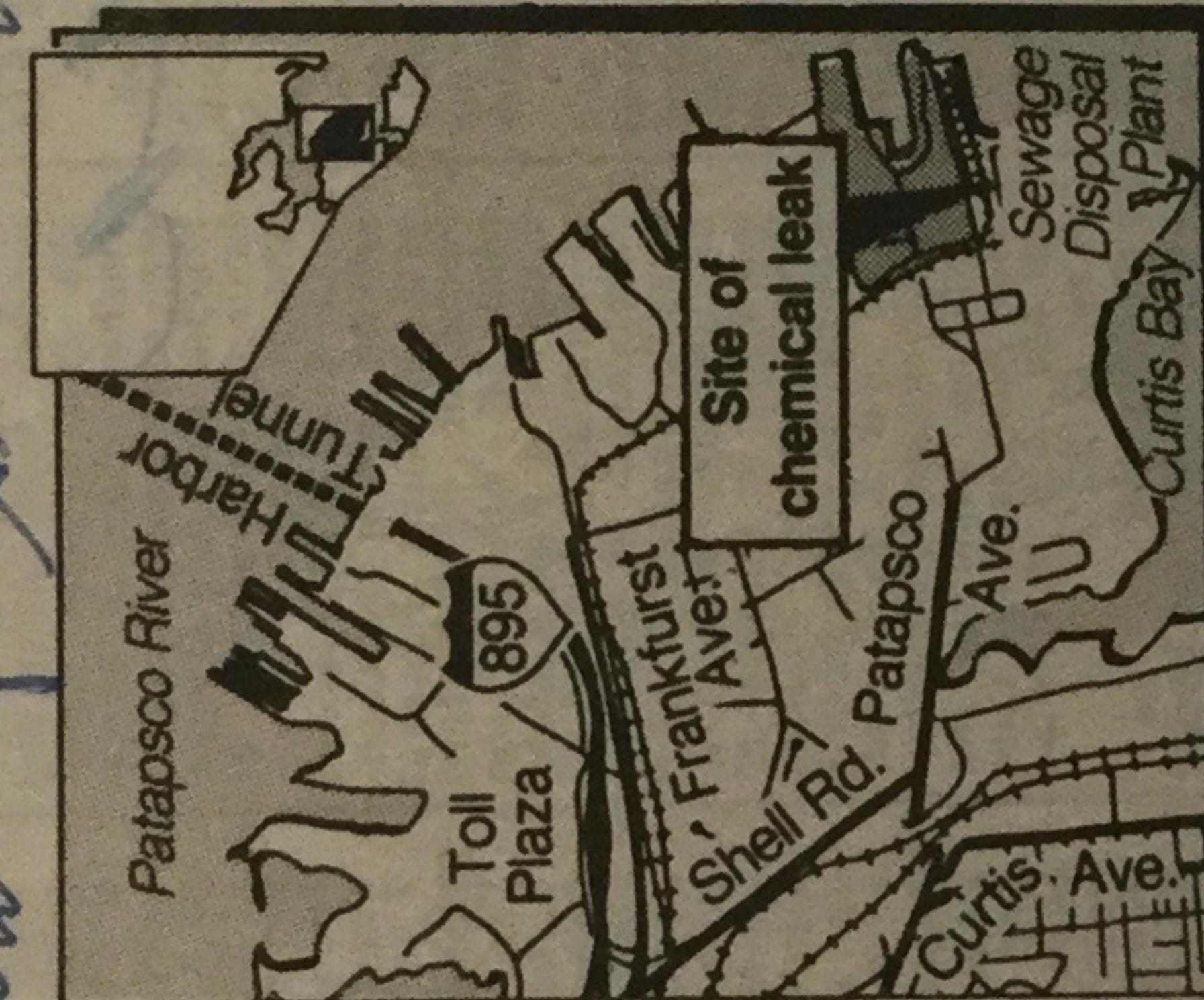
Flynn said "a weak, gray" cloud was headed toward the Inner Harbor yesterday afternoon, but that neither residents nor businesses in surrounding areas were affected by the leak.

Firefighters did not evacuate homes near the plant but did check surrounding neighborhoods to ensure that the cloud had dissipated, he said.

Flynn said he did not believe Delta was negligent in the accident. Milton Saul, acting assistant director for Maryland Occupational Safety and Health, said he was unaware of the accident yesterday afternoon and did not know whether MOSH would investigate.

Robert Farmer, vice president of operations for Delta, said the leak was "not anybody's error."

"The accident was one of those failures that was a once-in-a-lifetime thing," Farmer said. "I have no lack of confidence in our pro-



The Evening Sun

sides the sewage treatment plant which opened last September, the area houses a large oil refinery, several petroleum storage facilities and chemical manufacturing plants. "Folks in this area are routinely exposed to the potential of this kind of thing happening," said Ray Feldman, a spokesman for the state health department.

Seven years ago, three gas tanks at one of the petroleum storage facilities exploded, setting off a seven-alarm fire that gutted eight row-houses.

Many Wagners Point residents complain that the sewage and chemical plants emit noxious fumes, which require them to shut their windows and doors.

"This place is not fit for people to live," said George Farmer, of the 3800 block of Leo St. "You ought to come down when its damp out—it smells like rotting potatoes."

From his rowhouse, Farmer, 62, can see an oil refinery to the west and petroleum storage tanks to the south and east.

"We have quite a view," Farmer said, "and when they all start letting off fumes at one time, we have quite an odor, too."

Evening Sun  
August 8-1986  
*Ho. Mat.*

# Officials hunt for cause of chlorine leak

By Nancy Jeffrey  
Evening Sun Staff

A corroded gas pipe caused a chlorine leak in a Wagners Point chemical plant, injuring 12 employees, one seriously, and forcing the evacuation of the plant, city officials said yesterday.

State health officials said they had not yet determined whether the Delta Chemical Corp. was at fault in the accident at its plant in the 2600 block of Cannery Ave. near Fairfield, just west of the city's Patapsco Waste Water Treatment Plant.

Charles Clark, 33, who suffered chlorine inhalation and showed signs of pulmonary toxicity, was reported in serious condition, a University Hospital spokeswoman said.

Six other workers were treated and released from University for chlorine inhalation and face and eye burns. The other five workers were taken to South Baltimore General Hospital where they were treated and released.

The leak, which was reported at 12:24 p.m., occurred while workers were transferring chlorine gas from a 10,000-gallon railroad tank car into a 1-inch steel pipe, said fire department spokesman Capt. Patrick Flynn.

Several gallons of chlorine gas leaked through a small, corroded area of the pipe and a gray cloud of the deadly gas wafted into a nearby building, Flynn said.

See LEAK, D3, Col. 1

## 3 previous leaks beset Delta Corp.

By Derek Reveron

Evening Sun Staff

Yesterday's chlorine leak at Delta Chemical Corp. wasn't the company's first. The firm has had three previous chemical leaks and related accidents, and a variety of other problems as well.

Despite the leaks, Delta has a "good track record" regarding safety, especially when one considers the tons of chlorine the company has handled since it was founded in 1933, Delta president Richard H. Koumjian said.

He attributes the chlorine leaks to human error. "Some people, because they are human beings, they make some mistakes. They don't know what they are supposed to do," sometimes, he said.

Delta, which has about 75 employees, manufactures industrial chemicals, including those used for sewage and water treatment. As part of its operations, the company repackages chlorine, taking it from large tank cars and putting it into smaller containers for shipment.

See RECORD, D3, Col. 1

## 3 earlier leaks hit chemical firm

RECORD, From D1

Koumjian said the firm was founded by his father, Dikran, an Armenian immigrant who is the company's vice president. The two are owners of Delta, says Koumjian. Delta's secretary and treasurer are Rebecca L. Besson and John D. Bes- son, who are brother and sister, Koumjian said. Koumjian, declining to answer questions about Delta's fi- nances or operations, said, "We like to keep a low profile."

Before Delta moved to its present site in the Fairfield area of Baltimore in 1976, the firm was located in the 2100 block of Washington Blvd., where it lay in the path of Interstate 95 construction.

The company had wanted to relocate to the Marley Neck area of Anne Arundel County. However, the firm encountered several citizens groups angrily opposed to the move because they feared chlorine gas leaks and explosions.

The zoning battle came to a head in 1975, when the Anne Arundel County solicitor offered a legal opinion that chlorine is a detergent which would have permitted Delta to begin construction without public hearings. But Marley residents and several civic groups heatedly demanded public meetings.

Within two months after the "de- tergent" opinion, a second opinion by a new county solicitor described chlorine as explosive and very toxic. The new opinion said that Delta would have to ask for a special ex- ception—which requires a public

hearing—to move to Marley Neck.

The county denied Delta's re- quest for a special exception. Delta appealed the decision while it began to search for an alternative location. Then the company withdrew the ap- peal and announced the move to Fairfield.

Delta's previous leaks have caused injuries and an evacuation from a nearby company.

In November 1968, three people were hospitalized by chlorine gas that leaked from a broken pipeline connecting a railroad tank car and a company tank.

Another chlorine gas leak, in September 1969, swept a three-block manufacturing area, and caused Koppers Co. to send its employees home. The leak was caused by valves that were left open on a 14,000-gallon railroad tank car that contained chlorine gas. After the leak, a Delta spokesman said that the company was supposed to be closed during the weekend, and could not explain why the valves were left open.

In June 1974, three firemen were hospitalized after they used fans to disperse gas that escaped when the safety valve broke on a one-ton cylinder of chlorine gas. No employee injuries were reported.

In 1971, heavy rains swept 85 empty chlorine gas tanks into the Middle Branch of the Patapsco River. All of the tanks—each 1,500 pounds, 70-by-30 inches—were re- covered. Searchers had feared that gas residue in the tanks would contaminate the water if the fittings

had been knocked off. A Delta spokesman had denied that the tanks were dangerous.

Delta also has had labor prob- lems. In December 1965, a National Labor Relations Board trial examiner concluded that Delta violated the National Labor Relations Act, and recommended that Delta be made to negotiate with a union that was de- feated in an NLRB election.

The examiner asked the labor board to nullify the election outcome because management had illegally questioned and threatened workers, and made promises to them during the election campaign.

"There was some labor dispute," Koumjian said. "That's as much as I can remember about it."

In 1970, there were 4,000 gallons of laundry bleach that mysteriously disappeared from Delta's storage tanks. There is no report of the bleach ever being recovered. Koumjian declined to comment on the matter.

Delta has also been beset by other problems:

In 1961 vandals broke into the company and set it on fire with gaso- line from the company's pump that they unlocked with keys from the firm's office. Two doors were dam- aged.

In 1969, 100 firefighters battled a four-alarm fire that burned out Delta's two-story warehouse just off Washington Boulevard.

In 1963, police reported that a thief stole 392 paychecks from a metal cabinet in the offices of Delta.

Haz. Mat.

Theater  
Name  
August 8, 1986  
Date



THE SUN/EDWIN REINHOLD

Firefighters investigate chlorine leak in a railroad tank car at Delta Chemical Corp.