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Police probing fatal explosion

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Related photo on Page 1B

One person was killed and two others were injured late Monday night when an explosion ripped through a home at 3424 Olive St.

Firemen termed the explosion "suspicious" and police launched a full-scale investigation.

A neighbor said he saw two men flee from the home at the time the blast occurred.

Authorities did not reveal the identity of the body found in the house after firefighters extinguished the blaze, pending notification of next of kin. The body appeared to be that of a black man.

A spokeswoman at Methodist Medical Center identified the injured as Linda Mead, 26, and Charles Tolliver, 21.

Both suffered second-degree burns. Ms. Mead suffered burns on her right hand, elbow and neck and Tolliver received burns on his face and arms. Both were admitted to the hospital.

Ms. Mead was listed in guarded condition and Tolliver was said to be in stable condition early Tuesday morning.

Battalion Fire Chief Robert Pettijohn said he found gasoline on the floor of the burned-out home. He said the explosion was so powerful it pushed the front of the two-story frame home outward about four inches and knocked the front porch off of the house.

Harry Stains, of 3421 Olive St., whose residence is near the home, said he saw two men flee from the house after the explosion occurred. He said one of the men may have been knocked down by the blast.

"I'm working on a bathroom down there," Stains said, pointing to his home, "and I saw one guy blown off the porch. I don't know if he was blown or rolled off the porch."

"I heard one of them say, 'let's get the hell out of here,' he said, after he heard the explosion."

"I opened the door and, good God I

Please see **Police/Page 2A**

Police

saw flames shoot out of the house!" he added.

Stains said his wife heard a vehicle pass their home, which is located on a dead-end street near the scene, shortly before the explosion, but she didn't think anything of the incident.

Other neighbors said they saw a pickup truck outside the home before the blast. One woman said the explosion sounded with a loud blast and she saw flames "shooting up out of the windows."

Police detectives were called to the scene to investigate the fire late Monday. Officers were

summoned to keep curious onlookers away from the home, which had puddles of gasoline inside it.

Several windows in the home were knocked out, and the upper portion of the window frames were burned, as was the upper level of the front of the home.

The name on a mailbox at the home indicated a Matt Cary lives there. Neighbors said Ms. Mead also lived at the home. Cary is listed in the 1982 city directory as living at that address and his occupation is listed as a powderman (handler of explosives) for Westlake Quarry.