December 21, 2011 by Dr. Alan Russell

Picture the scene: an early April morning at a Calamus, Iowa farm co-op. Two workers were pumping pressurized liquid ammonia into a nurse tank for a farmer who planned to apply the ammonia to the soil in a cornfield later that day. Suddenly, an ear-splitting concussion rocked the work site as a weld on the nurse tank ripped open. The explosion hurled one man against a nearby truck, knocking him unconscious. His coworker pulled him away from the cloud of toxic ammonia vapor, but he inhaled ammonia while saving his unconscious friend and later died of inhalation burns. The surviving worker suffered permanent, disabling lung and skin damage.

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