

Man Dies in West Slope Propane Blast

By Anna Haislip, Denver Post
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At 3:10 this afternoon, rescue workers found the body of a man believed to be the owner of the Oak Creek house leveled by a propane explosion earlier in the day.

"I am sad to hear the victim was inside," said Joe Opp, 53, who lives about 12 blocks from the explosion site in the town of Oak Creek, about 20 miles south of Steamboat Springs.

Peter Nauman is the owner of the house, which officials believe exploded due to an exterior propane tank.

The Routt County Coroner is not confirming the identity of the victim until further investigation.

Chuck Vale, Routt County emergency manager, said the victim's body was found in the basement crawl space, but it is unclear what he was doing at the time of the explosion.

The 8:30 a.m. explosion rattled windows several blocks away.

Joe Opp said he heard a large boom, which he assumed was snow sliding off his roof.

"I didn't know the explosion happened because I just thought it was snow," Opp said. "When I looked around outside, I saw smoke and started to hear sirens."

Opp walked towards the smoke, and discovered the home, he describes as an older mining-style house, completely flattened.

"The explosion blew the house's walls and doors completely out," he said. "And the roof was down on the house's foundation."

Opp said he also saw a dog, he believes to be the homeowner's, walking around the site with singed fur.

Opp said debris from the explosion also damaged nearby homes by knocking out windows. "I am surprised more homes weren't damaged by the explosion," he said.

Both Oak Creek Fire Rescue and Steamboat Fire Rescue responded to the explosion, and Oak Creek police officers, Routt County Sheriff's deputies, and workers from Oak Creek Public Works assisted in the search and removal of the victim.



Firefighters examine the wreckage of the explosion site. (Special to The Denver Post)