Worker Killed in Prime of Life



Little is known about Antonio Tapia, 27, except that he was a Mexican immigrant and was living with a relative, Ricardo Vega Sanchez, and Sanchez's wife and daughter, in Burlington, NJ.

Sanchez survived, but suffered severe burns, along with a third worker, while Tapia died in a Brooklyn home where the three had been applying a sealant to a ritual Jewish bath.

The product the three had been using reportedly was Rub-R-Wall, a flammable sealant that carries a strong warning that it should not be used indoors or in confined spaces. The sealant was being stored and heated in a truck outside and pumped into the basement.

Fire officials say ventilation in the basement was poor and a spark from a power tool triggered a powerful blast that shook the neighborhood and blew out windows. Witnesses described seeing a nearly naked man on fire running from the home.

One of the residents of the luxury home had just walked out of the kitchen before the explosion ripped through the kitchen floor. She was not injured.

The workers' employer, J.M. Pereira and Sons of Langhorne, PA, was issued a fire department summons for storing more than five gallons of flammable liquid without a permit.