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Article published July 07, 2010

**1 person killed, another freed from rubble of Fremont building collapse**

BLADE STAFF

FREMONT — One person was killed and another was trapped for hours beneath rubble when a roof partially collapsed at a northwest Ohio food processing plant on Wednesday afternoon, police said.



A victim being removed from an ambulance and put onto a Life Flight helicopter at The Fremont Co. after the roof caved in partially Wednesday. (THE BLADE/JEREMY WADSWORTH)

Police late Wednesday identified the man who was killed at the Fremont Co., 802 North Front St., as Nate Kern, a 35-year-old resident of Gibsonburg, Ohio, who was an employee of B&W Welding, Inc., also of Fremont, which was working on the building's roof.

Fremont Police Chief Tim Wiersma identified the man who was trapped for four hours before being freed as Todd Michael, 44, the owner of B&W Welding, Inc.

"He was actually saying how much the concrete weighed on top of him," Chief Wiersma said of Mr. Michael.

The chief said the man was "battling" and "being proactive" in trying to save himself.

Mr. Michael was freed by rescue crews and flown to a Toledo hospital by helicopter just after 5:30 p.m.

The part of the building where the roof collapsed is where the company cooks its products.

Fremont police initially said four workers were trapped at the Fremont Co. when part of the roof collapsed about 1:30 p.m., but rescue efforts throughout the afternoon were focused on Mr. Kern and Mr. Michael. It is believed that one man was treated and released from the hospital earlier in the afternoon and another was taken by air ambulance to a Toledo hospital.

Bob Morton, of Fremont and a friend of Fremont Co. President Richard Smith, said earlier in the afternoon he was told all of the food plant's employees were unharmed.

"It is two workers who are not employed by the company per se -- contract workers there -- who are trapped," Mr. Morton said. "One they could hear from and the other they could not."

Fremont Co. spokesman Chris Smith said that the workers were welding on the roof when it collapsed. One worker was hurt but able to escape and rescue crews spent the afternoon trying to free the two trapped workers.

Mr. Morton said he received his information from Mr. Smith and a Fremont police officer at the scene.

"The police had the area blocked off, there were several fire trucks, and they had Front Street blocked off, and there were a lot of emergency vehicles," Mr. Morton said. "I did talk to Dick Smith and he was obviously not in good spirits."

City of Toledo fire crews responded to the building collapse along with the area's Regional Structural Collapse Response Unit.

Three Toledo fire trucks arrived just before 2:30 p.m. along with a special operations trucks, said Jerusalem Township Fire Chief

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The Fremont Co. was founded in 1905 as the Fremont Kraut Co. by Allen Slessman.

The company employs about 300 people, and processes and sells sauerkraut and other food products. Company labels have included Frank's Totally Tomato Ketchup and Mississippi Barbecue Sauce, sold in places like Sam's Club and area restaurants.

Fremont is 33 miles southeast of Toledo.

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