July 27, 1948; Kings Mine, Princeton, Ind.; 13 Killed

(From Bureau of Mines report, by James Westfield, F. J. Smith, J. S. Malesky, J. A. McCune, G. W. Colbert, and C. M. Dovidas)

The mine had been idle from July 14 to July 27 to seal 1 and 2 west off the main north, 3 west, where water and methane were excessive. A squeeze developed in 1 and 2 east, and this section was also sealed inby the No. 8 crosscut. The mine examiner's report for that morning showed the mine to be free from gas accumulations. An overall inspection on the preceding 2 days by a group of inspectors and officials had reported it safe. The company safety inspector had been in the 1 and 2 east section just before 1:00 p.m., but he had not tested for gas or inspected the seals.

The mine foreman entered the section about 10 minutes before 1 o'clock, when the section foreman and men in 5 and 6 east section felt the explosion. When the section foreman encountered smoke and fumes near 3 and 4 east, he told his men to return to their section and prepare to put up barricades. He went on to 1 and 2 east and telephoned to the shaft bottom to call for help. Word was sent to the deputy mine inspector and to the rescue stations at Bicknell and Terre Haute and to the Federal Bureau of Mines at Vincennes.

Mine officials entered and immediately started restoring ventilation by placing canvas stoppings where wooden doors and stoppings had been demolished. No gas masks or breathing apparatus was used. Two men suffering from burns and afterdamp were found and taken outside. All of the injured men and bodies were taken out by 4: 30 p. in. that day. Twelve men were killed outright, and 1 of 3 injured died on the way to the hospital. The other 160 men in the mine escaped without injury.

Ventilation in the 1 and 2 east section had been short-circuited for some time before the explosion. A trip of cars blocked a door open; a door was being erected at another place, and a shuttle car was standing under a check curtain. Methane leaked from behind the seals and moved out over a drill truck on 2 east entry at No. 5 crosscut. An arc from the drill truck probably ignited the gas, and coal dust was stirred up and propagated the explosion (fig, 157). Rock dust applied in entries and rooms prevented a widespread explosion. Smoking was also a possible source of ignition, as several of the victims carried matches, lighters, and smoking materials.

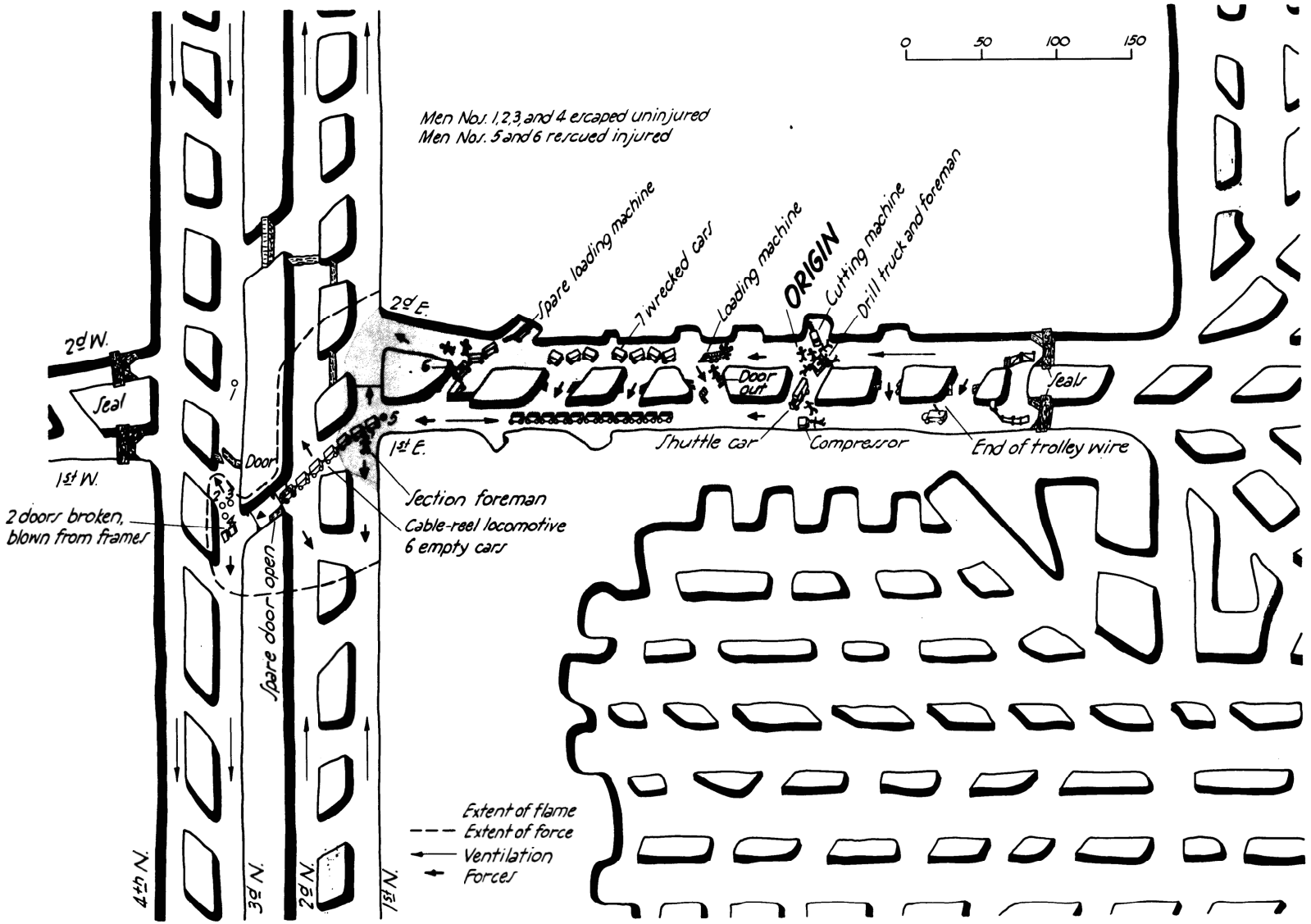

FIGURE 157.—Map of explosion area, Kings mine, Princeton, Ind., July 27, 1948.