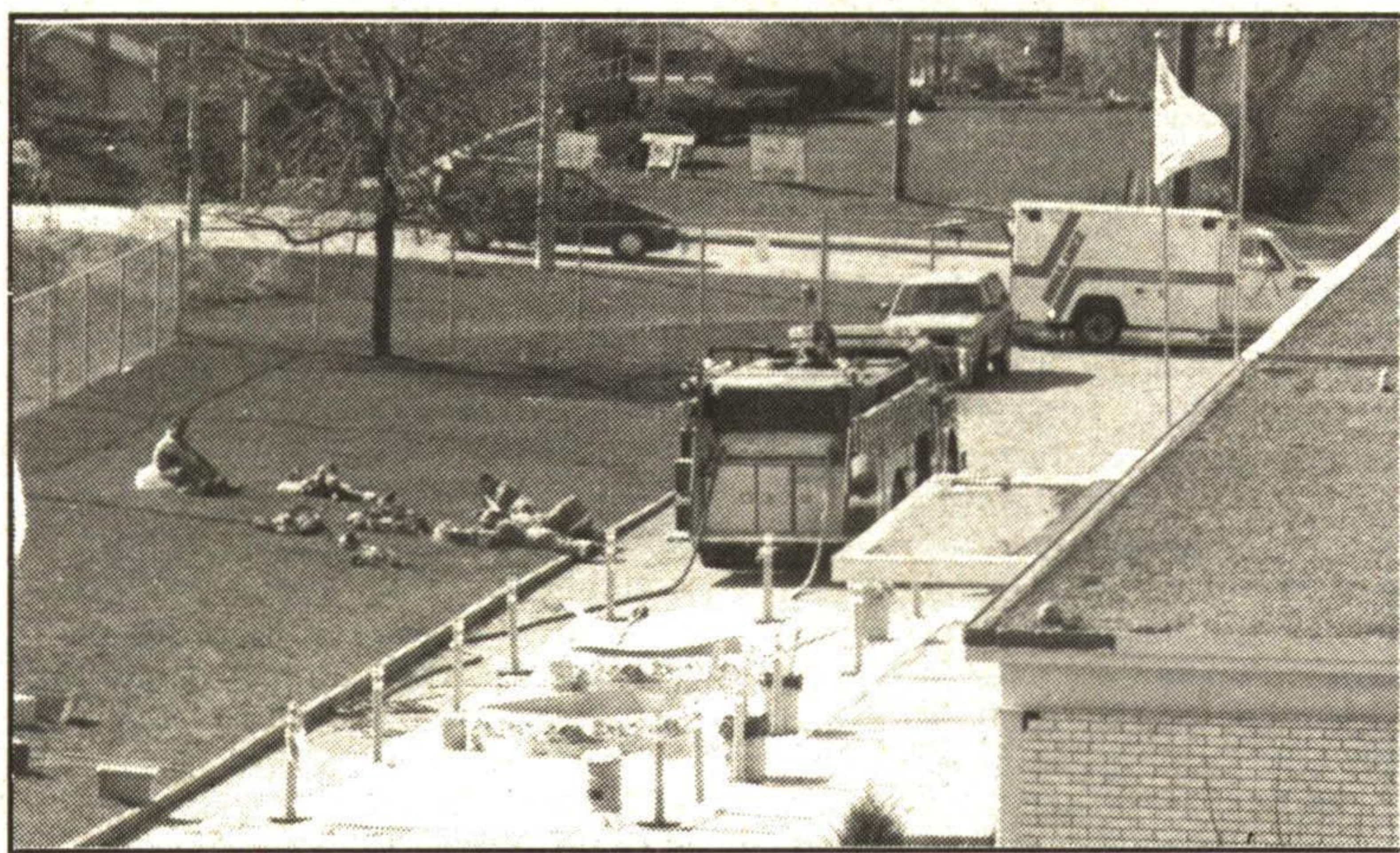# Chemical spill forces evacuation of Varian

All 200 employees at Varian were evacuated Wednesday afternoon after a small acid spill.

About 30 employees were taken to Georgetown and District Memorial Hospital where they were treated and released.

Just before 2 p.m. an employee was splashed with hydrofluoric acid, which is used to clean some components. The employee panicked, and caused three other workers to be splashed as well, according to police. These four employees showered and then were treated for burns at the hospital. The rest of the employees who were in the area were taken to hospital and treated for inhalation of fumes.

The Halton Hills Fire Department was called to clean up the spill, which was under one litre, said Joe Caldarelli, general manager of Varian.

Everything was back to normal

Fire and ambulance crews clean up a chemical spill at Varian in Georgetown.

Thursday, except that some cleaning up in the area was still going on, and one employee didn't come in because of a rash on his neck.

The Ministry of Labor is investigating the incident.

It's peak season for grass fires

By JANET BAINE
Staff writer

About 70 volunteer firefighters in Halton Hills were exceptionally busy in April because the number of grass fires almost doubled over last year.

Last year there were 20 grass fires in April, while this year that number has increased to 37 fires.

"It's always a bad month as the grass is starting to dry out, and people are out trying to clean up their yards. They do a lot of raking and want to burn," Fire Prevention Officer David Ford said.

"I think it's (worse this year) because of a combination of dry and relatively mild weather. The wind conditions and more vegetation growth lead to more fires," he said. Perhaps because the winter was long and hard, people are itching to get out more than usual, adding to the problems.

"People are not aware of the

dangers of (burning yard waste) and consequently they learn the hard way," he said.

Education is the key to preventing this type of fire. In addition to the regular notices which the fire department puts in the newspaper about fire prevention, a burn permit system has been in place in Halton Hills for about five or six years. Burn permits are issued free of charge after an inspection takes place and some conditions, geared to prevent fires from getting out of control and causing property damage, are set.
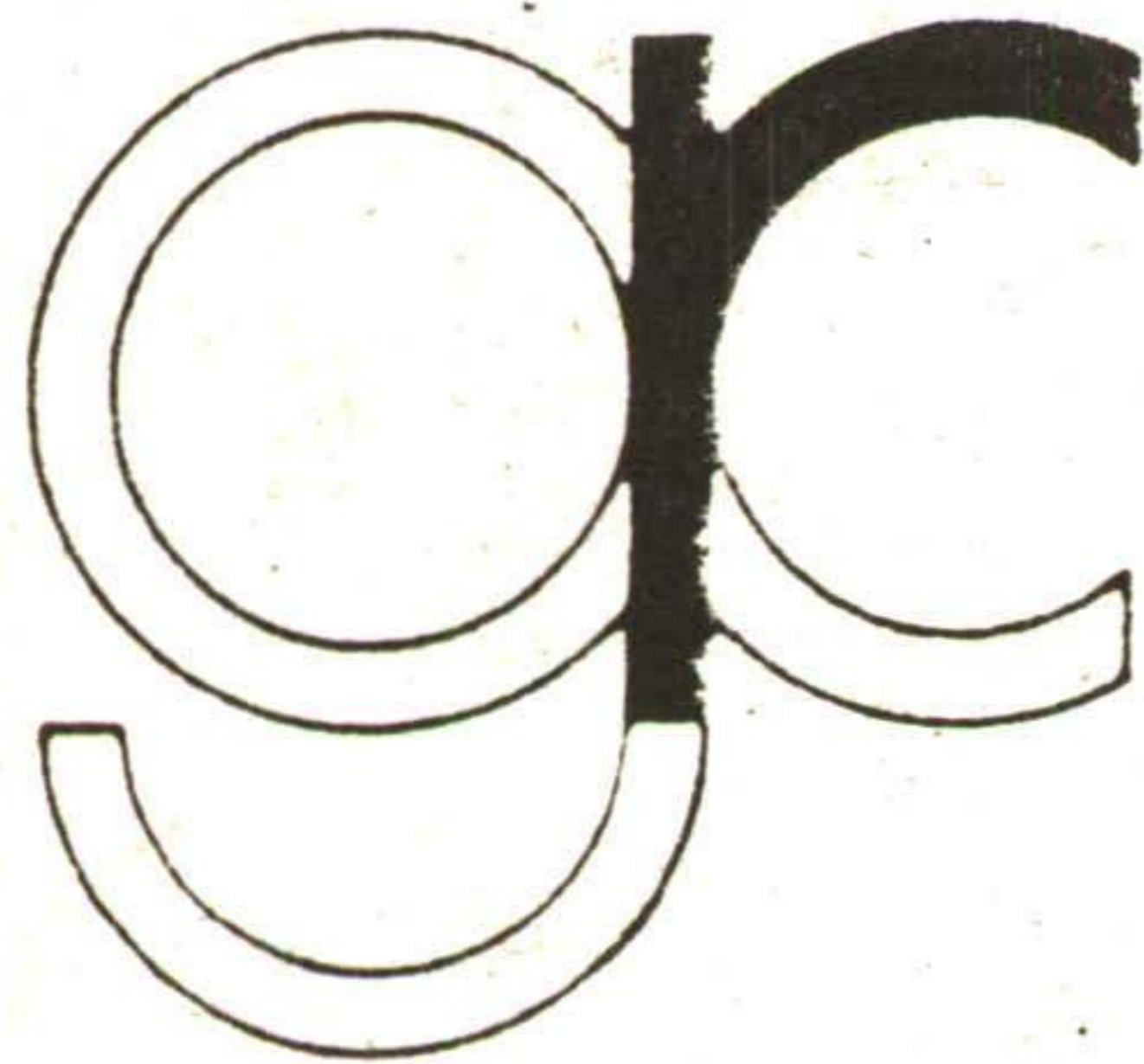
Twenty of this April's fires were started by people who didn't obtain burn permits, and only three were started by people who did have permits. These statistics speak for themselves, Ford said, and reveal that the educational component to the burn permit system works.

"When we do our inspection, we give out a brochure on how an open

burn must be conducted," he said. People are told to keep equipment to put out a fire, like a shovel or rake and buckets of water, nearby. They need to keep away from buildings, and may be told to build a pit. There are several conditions which are set out in the permit, and these can depend on the site and the material to be burned.

Eight of April's fires were started by kids. Usually, they start a small fire, then put it out. Then start a fire that's a little bigger, and eventually they can't extinguish the fire and the fire department is called. Like the adults, these children don't usually make the same mistake twice, and very rarely do they repeat their experience, Ford said. Four of the fires in April were started by trains or CN crews, and two had an unknown cause.

For information on a burn permit, contact the Halton Hills Fire Department at 877-1133.