Markham firefighters carry hoses along a smoke-filled corridor at Markham Stouffville Hospital during mock disaster — an explosion and fire — on Tuesday.

'Explosion' tests hospital

BY KATHLEEN GRIFFIN
Staff Writer

Markham Stouffville Hospital tested its evacuation strategy Tuesday, staging a mock fire and explosion that forced about 50 volunteer patients from their beds to the parking lot.

Six months in the planning, York Regional Police, Markham Fire and York Region EMS all participated in the fake disaster, handling triage, crowd control, and rescuing a man supposedly hurt in the explosion in a third floor boiler room, which knocked out a wall.

The explosion, a code green, also caused flooding and the loss of power as smoke, generated by machines, filled the hallways.
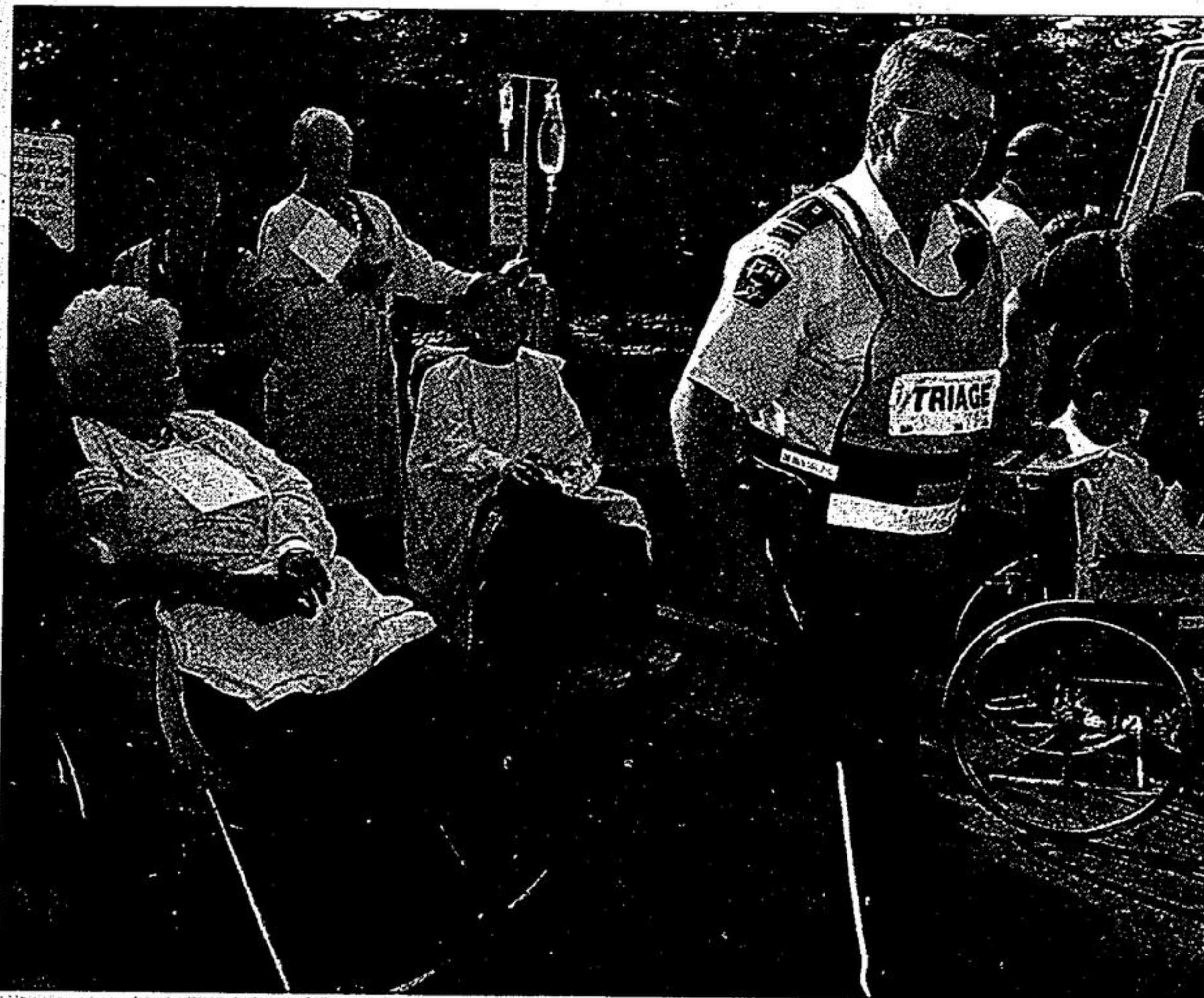
Two or three patients from every clinical department evacuated with their doctors, nurses and health care aides to four sites outside.

"The goal is to test evacuation routes and procedures and identify any gaps," explained hospital spokesperson Pam Brodie. "As well, it's to test communications with external agencies, something that's usually faulted when situations like this occur."
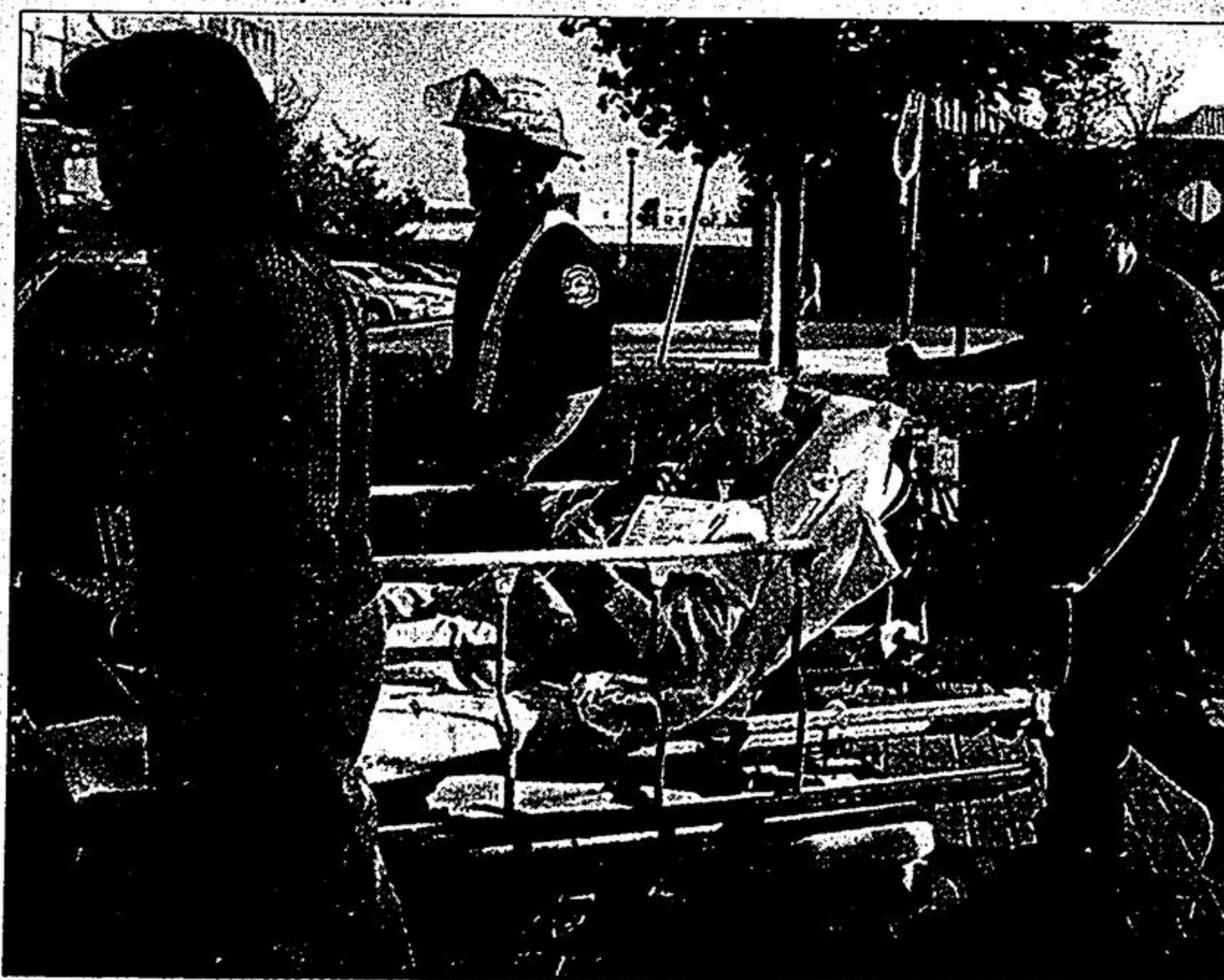
She said extra staff were assigned for the day to ensure patient care wasn't jeopardized.

The exercise took more than four hours as staff and emergency services personnel were debriefed after patients returned inside.

Markham EMS/triage Operations Supervisor Tim McMullin checks on patients at the triage centre in the hospital's parking lot.

Patients are led out of Markham Stouffville Hospital to a triage site in the hospital parking lot.

PHOTOS BY STEVE SOMERVILLE