

Eight die, 26 rescued as NEMA blames structural failure for Lagos building collapse

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Scene of the Lagos incident. PHOTO: ENIOLA DANIEL

Eight persons were confirmed dead while 26 others were rescued alive yesterday after a three-storey building collapsed at Alakija, Old Ojo Road, near Alakija Bus Stop, off the Lagos-Badagry Expressway, Satellite Town, in Ori-Ade Local Council Development Area (LCDA), Lagos.

Emergency responders, including the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), the Lagos State Fire and Rescue Service (LSFRS) and the [Lagos State Emergency Management Agency](#) (LASEMA), were deployed to the scene after the building collapsed at about 11:00 a.m.

Personnel from the Ijegun-Egba Fire Station were immediately mobilised and arrived at the scene at 11:49 a.m.

The collapsed structure was a three-storey residential building occupied by several tenants at the time of the incident.

It also housed a number of businesses, including cyber cafés, a photo studio, phone repair shops, mobile network outlets, a bookshop and office spaces. Residents described it as one of the oldest buildings in the area, having stood for more than 30 years.

One eyewitness recounted how she narrowly escaped the disaster after attending a meeting elsewhere. She said she had planned to visit a phone shop in the building to exchange mobile phones but decided to attend the meeting instead.

According to her, she had considered leaving the meeting if it did not begin on time, unaware that the decision would save her life. She added that she had called another person who was inside the building to join the meeting, a move she believes also saved that individual, as the building collapsed less than 15 minutes after they left.



Witnesses said the phone shop was usually crowded with customers, raising fears that the number of casualties and trapped victims could be higher than initially reported.

It was learnt that a friend of one of the occupants had advised him to leave the building on Wednesday afternoon during a visit, but the occupant chose to remain.

A woman who lost her child in the incident was seen crying and blaming herself for waking the child to accompany her to the shop.

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While relatives of the deceased wailed, other occupants were seen trying to salvage their belongings from the scene amid the chaos.

Discover

Speaking with more lian, the Head of Operations, NEMA Lagos Territorial Office, Mohammed Olatunde, said: “The three-storey building collapsed after 11:00 a.m. The rain is making the rescue operation difficult.”



Entrepreneurship

He added that 26 people had been rescued, while eight bodies were recovered from the rubble.

Resources

Commenting on the cause of the collapse, he said: “The structural integrity of the building had been compromised. We learnt that the building had shown signs of imminent collapse for days, but the occupants remained inside. The collapse was bound to happen.”

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The Director General, LASEMA, Olatunde Akinsanya, said the agency activated the state’s emergency response plan immediately after receiving distress calls.



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He added: “There was a structural defect in the building. We learnt that even the staircases were shaking, but people remained in the building.”



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A resident, who identified himself simply as Stanley, said: “The number of casualties would have been higher but for the weekly environmental sanitation exercise. A father and his son were rescued, but the father was unconscious.



Demographics

“A woman lost her 18-year-old child in the building.”

A shop owner, Chidinma Asogwa, said: “The incident happened as some shop owners returned to the market before the weekly environmental sanitation exercise ended. I had a sister there, but she was rescued along with her son.

“The occupants were told to vacate the building on Monday, but it collapsed today.”