

# Transformer explosion kills two A'Ibom inmates

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Picture of a transformer explosion

By Patrick Odey

An explosion from a faulty transformer located near the Akwa Ibom State Custodian Centre has killed two inmates awaiting trial at the centre and injured two others.

Our correspondent learnt on Thursday that the incident which occurred a fortnight ago caused a blackout throughout the period and damaged electrical appliances in the centre.

According to reports, the high-voltage wire snapped and dropped directly on a portion of the custodian facility, causing electrocution, which led to the death of the inmates.

Meanwhile, the Akwa Ibom State Controller of Corrections, Frank Okonkwo, who confirmed the tragic passing of its two awaiting trial inmates of the Uyo custodial centre on Thursday, described the incident as unfortunate.



Okonkwo, who regretted that the incident also damaged all electrical appliances at the centre, disclosed that the victims were thrown up where they were sitting and were later rushed to the University of Uyo Teaching Hospital by the facility's doctor and later pronounced dead.

He disclosed that the victims were awaiting trials for conspiracy, kidnapping and armed robbery, noting, however, that they were presumed innocent until proven otherwise by the court.

He said the families had been contacted, and one of them had concluded the processes for the retrieval of the corpse, saying that the command would only release the corpse upon completion of investigations.

According to him, "It was very unfortunate, because the thing caused a lot of damage, both to our facility and the families of the deceased.

"When that explosion occurred at the transformer, officials of PHEDC came and said the explosion was a result of too much voltage. The thing affected us because it actually damaged all electrical appliances and computers in our facility.

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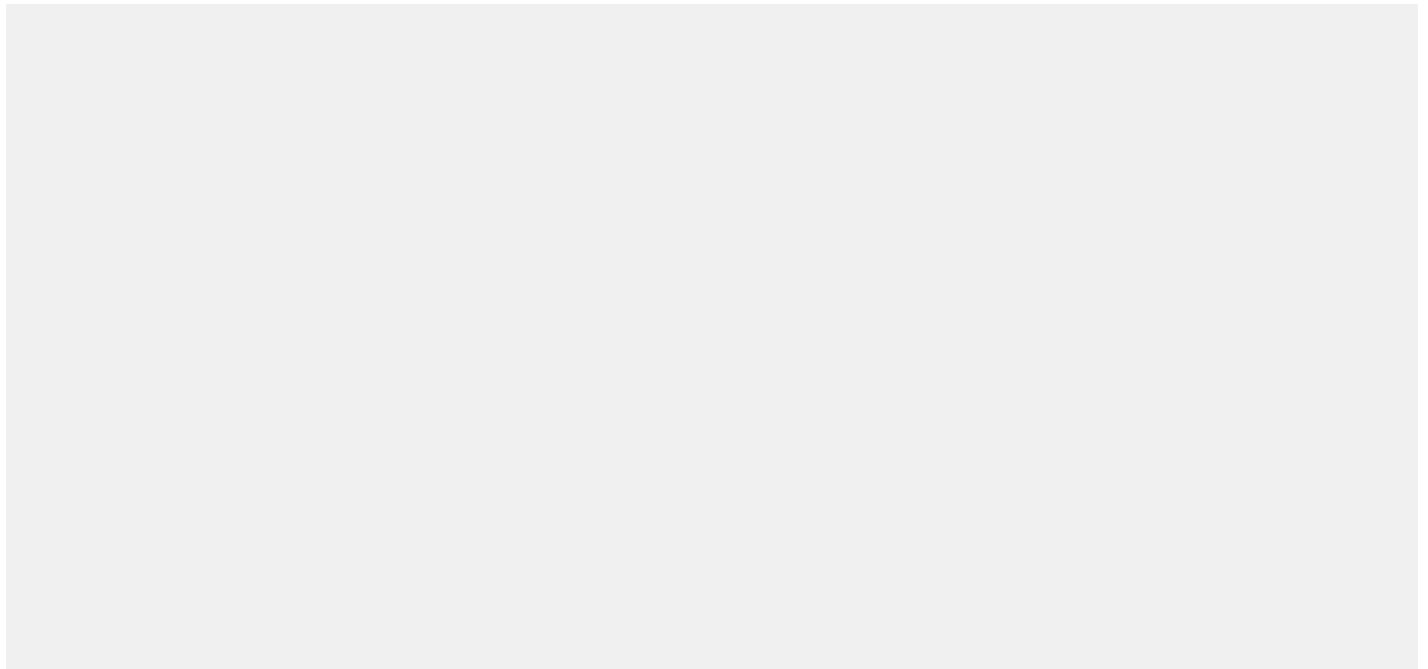
"It affected our barracks as well, and even the official residence of the officer in charge. But the most painful aspect of it was that it affected two of our inmates, who finally lost their lives as they were rushed to the hospital.

"They were thrown off from where they were staying, and immediately our medical personnel administered first aid, and rushed them to the University of Uyo Teaching Hospital, where they were later confirmed dead.

"It was a big loss, both to themselves and to the inmates, especially when they were just awaiting trial, one of them was standing trial for conspiracy and kidnapping, the other one for armed robbery.

The controller, who recalled that the same transformer was faulty a few years back, though no life was lost, called on the relevant authority to address the issue to forestall recurrence.

He added that the legal department was investigating the matter and would present a comprehensive report accordingly.



He also disclosed plans by the command to organise a rehabilitation and empowerment programme for Inmates who have gone through the process, saying such inmates have acquired some skills and would be given start-up packs to enable them to be fully integrated when they are eventually discharged into the larger society.

According to him, the programme would enable them to be useful to themselves and the community, so that they don't have any cause to reoffend and come back to the custodial centre.

“We are looking at 30 for now because the financing is going to be huge, because we relying mainly on the goodwill of our donors and organisations, those who have acquired various skills while in our custody, different skills like tailoring, carpentry, barbing and welding and we intend to draw the beneficiaries from various custodial centres, Uyo, Ikot Abasi, Ikot Ekpene and Eket.

“Those who are serving terms but are on the verge of being discharged between now and December are convicts who have successfully accepted our treatment regime by getting themselves usefully engaged when they were in our custody. Those are the ones we want to show appreciation to by organising this programme.”