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Three Cross River varsity students, one staff member die in road crash

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| By Christabel Ndoeche

A road crash along the Calabar–Itu Highway in Cross River State has killed three students of the University of Cross River State and a staff member after a coaster bus conveying students collided with a container truck while returning from an official assignment in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State.

The university said on Saturday that 24 students, mostly members of the Students' Union Government executive, were involved in the accident, which occurred in Odukpani Local Government Area on Friday night, Channels Television reports.

In a statement by the university's Public Relations Officer, Onen Ebri Onen, the institution confirmed the deaths of Director of Sports of the SUG, Solomon Uya; a Chemistry student and President of the Faculty of Physical Sciences Students' Association, Lucky Erim; Favour Darlington of the Department of Educational Management; and Mr. Anthony Arikpo, a university staff member who drove the vehicle.

“Their visit was to express solidarity and to ensure that all necessary medical attention is being provided,” the statement quoted the Vice Chancellor, Professor Francisca Bassey, who had visited injured students at different hospitals alongside the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic), Professor Stella Maris-Okey.

It added that the Vice Chancellor expressed shock over the incident and assured affected families and survivors of the institution’s support.

“The Vice Chancellor has expressed deep shock over this tragic occurrence and extended heartfelt condolences to the families of the deceased,” the statement said.

“The entire UNICROSS community mourns with the respective bereaved families and prays for the peaceful repose of the souls of the departed and for the swift and complete recovery of those receiving treatment,” it added.

Survivors of the crash are currently receiving treatment in different hospitals, while the university said it is monitoring their recovery.

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In a separate statement, the Cross River State Police Command confirmed that the accident occurred on Friday at about 9:25 p.m. at Ikot Okon along the same highway, involving a container truck and a coaster bus believed to be carrying students of the university.

Police spokesperson, ASP Sunday Akata, said the crash resulted in multiple fatalities and injuries.

“Preliminary reports indicate that the coaster bus was reportedly conveying passengers believed to be students of Cross River State University when it was involved in a collision with the container truck,” the police statement said.

The command added that one victim died at the scene, while another later succumbed to injuries in the hospital.

Police said operatives evacuated injured victims to the University of Calabar Teaching Hospital and deposited the bodies of the deceased in the morgue, while traffic was restored after clearance operations.

It also disclosed that the truck driver fled the scene, adding that efforts were ongoing to locate him as investigations continue.

The police urged motorists to drive cautiously on highways, especially while investigations seek to establish the cause of the crash.