

Death toll from Niger tanker explosion hits 42, injured now 52

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•Governor orders evacuation of injured to Gwagwalada specialist hospital

From **John Adams**, Minna

The death toll from Tuesday fuel tanker explosion at Essan community, Katcha Local Government, Niger state, has reached 42.

Also, the number of those injured during the explosion now stood at 52, and of this number, 13 are said to be in critical condition.

The public relations officer of the Niger State Emergency Management Agency (NISEMA), Mallam Husseini Mohammed, disclosed this to our Correspondent on telephone in Minna, yesterday, even as clearance operations at the scene of accident is still ongoing.

He disclosed further that 13 of the injured victims, who have severe cases have been moved to the Gwagwalada Specialist Hospital, on the order of the state Governor Umaru Mohammed Bago, while 26 are at the Bida Federal Medical Centre (FMC),receiving treatment.

According to Hussini,"those who have minor cases are being treated at their various homes by their relations."

The cause of frequent fuel tanker and other articulated vehicles accident along the road has been attributed to the deplorable condition of the 70 kilometers portion of the 180 kilometers Bida-Agaie-Lapai- lambata.

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The contract was awarded by late former President Muhammadu Buhari administration, under the Nigerian Nations Petroleum Corporation Limited (NNPCL) in 2018.

The contract was abandoned after the completion of Lambata-Lapai section of the road, leaving the 70 kilometers as death trap.

Meanwhile the people of Essan community, have sent a passionate appeal to President Bola Tinubu to come to aid of the community and complete the remaining portion of the road.

The people said the neglect of the road has claimed the lives of over 80 innocent Nigerians in the last six months, while about 100 others are struggling for their lives after injuries sustained in various accidents on the road.

“Painfully, 90% of the victims, both the dead and the injured ,are from Essa Village in Katcha LG, Essa, a peaceful and hardworking community, is now covered in tears and mourning.

“Families have lost fathers, mothers, youths, and children all because of a road that should have been repaired long ago”.

The community in a statement in Minna by Comrade Usman U. Patagi, pointed out that “The Bida–Badegi and Agaie Road has become a death trap for traders, students, and travelers, who pass it daily. Our people have cried out for years, but no help has come”, the community said.