

60-yr-old widow, 4 others roasted to death

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.12 cars, 30 shops, Mini park razed

It was a dark Friday in Rivers State, when a tanker loaded with fuel plunged into a market and went up in flames at Mbiama, Ahoada West Local Government Area of the State, killing a 60-year widow and four others.

Also, unspecified number of shops believed to be used by hawkers, a mini-Park owned by the National Union of Road Transport Workers Union (NURTW), houses and cars near the scene of the crash were destroyed.

It was leant that the 60-year old widow who sells local gin at the

marker, perished in the explosion due to her ill-health.

Weekend Champion observed that more casualties would have been recorded, but because most of the hawkers who own the makeshift shops were by the road side selling sachet water, drinks and similar items to travellers.

Mbiama is a boarder community on the East-West between Rivers and Bayelsa State, even as the incident paralysed vehicular movements for hours.

An eyewitness who did not want his name in print, said the truck laden with fuel was coming from Warri in Delta State, was on

speed when it lost control, hit a smaller car, plunged into the market, upturned, spilling its content and reportedly went up in flames.

A mechanic, who simply identified himself as Musa, told our reporter that his shop and vehicles of clients under repairs were razed by the inferno, saying, "Everything I get, I have lost. My shop, my house and vehicles under my repair have been destroyed. Where do I start from?" he lamented.

Timi, a lady who sells bread and consumable, blamed the driver of the tanker, saying, "all the drivers plying this route usually slow down when they get to this junction, but this driver was still on speed and he lost control," adding she lost all her goods and shop to the explosion.

Also, Davidson, who said he lost his home to the inferno, said: "I believe the tanker driver was careless, because with the information we had, they say he was coming down the way and he hit a car and it was on that speed that on reaching here he (the driver) lost control why trying to dodge a car coming from the opposite direction and turned".

Meanwhile, there was a mild drama as men of the Bayelsa State Fire Service were pelted with stones by

people, some of who suffered losses to the explosion because of the late arrival of the fire fighters.

Head of Operations, Federal Road Safety Corps, FRSC, Ahoada Unit in Rivers State, Mr. Alagoo Oja, who visited the scene, attributed the explosion to the impatience of the driver.

Oja said: "The tanker was coming from Warri axis, naturally, at this junction, there is bound to be traffic as always, but he (the driver) was not patient enough. So, while trying to dodge a smaller car, something he didn't expect happened.

"So, a little patient would have helped because all he needed is to be on the queue between other vehicles before he can move. "He was trying to dodge them (vehicles in front) and maybe go through the shorter route when his truck was loaded with consignment which was very wrong," the official said.

On the casualty figure, he said: "As at now, we don't know for sure, but we can see one casualty, but once the fire goes down we will be able to interface with the police and Civil Defence Corps to know if there were other casualties."

It would be recalled that a similar incident claimed over 200 lives last year in Okogbe axis of the East-West Road, also in Ahoada East Local Government Area of the State.

water producers warn wholesome sachets

supply to unsuspecting consumers at cheaper prices.

"Our products in Osun are properly labeled and followed the laid down regulations in production and supply to ensure safety and quality.

"The association always carries out sensitization and factory surveillance to sustain quality among our members and ensure that water produced in the state is in accordance with NAFDAC standard."

Bamidele however contended that water produced in the state are well packaged in hygienic condition with the approval of appropriate authorities

such as NAFDAC.

The chairman said that the current price of N100 per bag of sachet water was reasonable, saying that the cost of production has increased.

He stated that: "The economic hardship facing the masses was put into consideration otherwise a bag of sachet water could have been N140, because the cost of production has jumped up."

He further disclosed that the state government will soon make recycling machines available to the association so as to begin recycling of waste nylon instead of becoming a nuisance to the environment.