

Tanker explodes at Tafa

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TANKER EXPLODES AT Tafa

- 3 Killed in Inferno
- 15 Others Sustain Injuries
- 17 Houses, 12 Shops Destroyed

Three persons died yesterday while 15 others sustained injuries when a tanker loaded with petroleum lost control at Tafa, along the Abuja-Kaduna expressway and crashed.

Tafa, which is about 40-minute drive from Abuja city centre, is located in Kagarko Local Government Area of Kaduna State.

It was gathered that 17 houses and several fuel tankers parked along the highway in Tafa village were burnt in the incident.

Witnesses said the ill-fated tanker bearing, Shema Petroleum Ltd, was approaching Abuja from Kaduna, when it tried to avoid colliding with an oncoming car and crashed.

They said by the time the driver of the vehicle was able to regain control of the tanker and park it by the side of the road, it had been damaged and was seriously leaking fuel.

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Youths in the area, it was learnt, came in droves and started scooping fuel from the tanker.

Most of the people who sustained injuries were said to be scooping petroleum from the tanker when a fire started.

About 12 shops attached to a nearby brothel and a number of makeshift containers were also destroyed, residents said. The fire raged for about two hours before it was put out by men of the fire service, our reporter gathered.

Residents gave the names of two of the people who died in the incident simply as Hadiza Mai Tuwo and Bala Tela. The third person was yet to be identified at the time this report was filed.

Daily Trust on Sunday gathered that the injured persons were taken to the Umaru Musa Yar'adua Hospital in Sabo Wuse and the Suleja General Hospital, while those in critical condition were taken to the Abuja University Teaching Hospital in Gwagwalada.

The Divisional Police Officer (DPO) in Tafa, CSP Faruk Umar, refused to comment on the incident when our reporter visited around 5pm, insisting that only the spokesperson of the Kaduna State Police Command was authorized to brief the press on the incident.

The DPO said the state police commissioner had visited the scene shortly after the incident, charging him to submit a report as quickly as possible.

The Tafa axis of the Kaduna-Abuja expressway way has been a major source of concern to commuters who complain over the manner drivers park fuel-laden tankers by the roadside.

Promises by successive governments in Kaduna State to build a trailer park for tankers and other articulated vehicles at the area, drivers use for stopovers, were not fulfilled.

The present administration in the state, however, recently resumed construction work at the park.

Some of the drivers who spoke to our reporter lamented the situation, urging government to conclude work at the park so that they could stop parking their vehicles by the roadside.

Earlier yesterday, the spokesperson of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Yushau Shuaib, said a mosque was also destroyed in the incident but that there was no loss of life.

He said rescue workers were quickly mobilised to the scene to evacuate residents from the raging inferno.

“The accident was caused by the tanker driver’s attempt to escape a head on collision with the Golf car. He also tried to avoid the numerous tankers parked by the roadside.

“He, therefore, lost control and skidded off the road and fell down, spilling petrol which led to a fire outbreak,” he told the online newspaper Premium Times.

Daily Trust on Sunday gathered that one of the lanes of the expressway was closed to traffic following the incident.

Kaduna State police spokesperson, ASP Mukhtar Hussain Aliyu, who confirmed the incident, said it was while the youths in the

area gathered to scoop fuel from the tank that the explosion occurred.

He added that some of the youths had deposited their containers with a food vendor by the roadside.

“The fuel spilled to the food vendor and that ignited the fire,” he said.

He said the police with other agencies of government were able to put out the fire, adding that the situation had been brought under control.