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Pipeline fire: 5 dead, 12 buildings, 17 shops burnt

By Abdullateef Aliyu, Lagos | Published Date Jan 21, 2020 1:27 AM



Traders lament their burnt goods at the scene of the pipeline explosion at Ile Epo, Ekoru Road in Abule Egba area of Lagos State yesterday Photo: NAN

The death toll in the multiple pipeline explosion and fire blaze, which occurred on Sunday night at Abule Egba-Ile Epo, along the Lagos-Abeokuta expressway, Lagos, yesterday increased to five, with over a dozen buildings destroyed.

The fire, believed to have been caused by pipeline vandals, displaced scores of residents of the area.

The Lagos State Emergency Management Agency (LASEMA), which coordinated the emergency response that involved other agencies, confirmed that the death toll had increased from four lives that were initially reported when the incident broke out to five by yesterday afternoon.

The Director-General/Chief Executive Officer of LASEMA, Dr Olufemi Oke-Osanyintolu, said the fatalities comprised three men, one woman and a five-year-old girl.

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Oke-Osanyitolu disclosed that 20 persons with minor injuries were treated and discharged at the scene.

He said, at least, 12 buildings were affected within the neighbourhood of the explosion site, while 150 persons were displaced.

The buildings included a storey building at No. 18 Musa Erimo Street, four buildings on Joel Nnadede Street, three buildings on Hamed Sodiq Street and three bungalows on NNPC Powerline Road.

Also, an estimated number of 33 trucks, three cars and three commercial tricycles (Keke Marwa) were burnt, while no fewer than 17 shops were affected.

Many residents yesterday lamented that the illegal bunkering of petroleum products in the area had been going on for many years and accused the relevant authorities of lacking the will to curtail it.

Some of the residents alleged complicity among the security outfits in the illegal business.

Some of them claimed that one Taofeek was shot dead in 2017 when he raised an alarm over the nefarious activities of the oil thieves.

According to them, landlords in the area were afraid of the thieves and couldn't speak up.

A resident of Igoke Estate, Mr Ogunbanjo Taiwo, lost his five-year-old to suffocation as a result of the bellowing smokes that enveloped the area on Sunday night.

Another resident, Mrs Taiwo Odugbesan, said she lost everything she had ever worked for to the inferno. Mrs Odugbesan said, "I just bought my goods but everything, including all my money, is gone. I have no roof over my head as I speak."

Another resident, who spoke with our correspondent yesterday explained that prior to the explosion, the whole area was already engulfed with the smell of fuel, indicating that illegal bunkering was on-going.

"Some residents quickly relocated when the smell was everywhere. I wish the NNPC officials were on ground before the explosion," the resident, who declined to be named, said.

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