

Tanker Fire Kills 12 In Benue



By Hope Abah Emmanuel

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At least 12 dead bodies have been recovered on Sunday at the scene of a petroleum tanker explosion at Oshigbudu junction in Agatu Local Government Area of Benue State.

Witnesses said the tanker loaded with Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) was heading to Abuja from the Otukpo area of the state when the vehicle's brake allegedly failed, skidded off the road and exploded in flames.

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A resident, who witnessed the explosion, said the vehicle fell at the Oshigbudu-Obagaji junction about 1:00 pm and that the petrol started spilling before it exploded.

The resident said he feared that many people would have been roasted to death in the process.

“It was a very big fire which consumed nearby shops as well as several houses.

“We are afraid that many people would have been consumed because the fire is still raging,” the witness who declined his name on print said.

But, the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) in the state has so far confirmed 12 dead, including eight adult males, three adult females and one male child.

Corps Commander, Yakubu Mohammed, told our correspondent on the phone that the number could even be more, stressing that those 12 recovered at the moment were directly involved in the accident as he added that his men were yet to determine those who might have become victims in the houses caught up by the tragic fire.

A government official from the area, Alhaji Sule Audu, however, also told our correspondent on the phone that information available to him as of the time of this report suggested that eight bodies had been recovered.

Audu said the death toll might rise because there were still unidentified people which the tanker ran over when it veered off the road and fell by the side.

The government official however said that community and individual efforts had brought the fire under control after nearly three hours of raging relentlessly.

When contacted, the Director of Benue State Fire Service, Donald Ikyaaza, said he was not aware of the situation but promised to reach out to his men closer to the axis where the incident happened.

On his part, Vice Chairman of Agatu LGA, John Ikwulono, told newsmen in Makurdi that the situation of the tanker explosion was worsened by the non-availability of fire service in the local government.

Meanwhile, the FRSC Commander as of the time of this report attributed the cause of the fire incident to the loss of control of the vehicle by the driver.

He said the incident happened exactly 12:50 pm on Sunday, emphasising that the tanker fell and spilt its content.



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