

NEWS.

Two feared dead as fire guts free trade zone

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TWO persons were yesterday feared dead and property worth millions of naira destroyed as a fire incident gutted part of the Calabar Free Trade Zone (CFTZ).

The whereabouts of the driver, conductor and another passenger who was escorting the truck was not known, but sources at North West said they both died while others speculated that the driver and two others ran away.

However, officials of the zone who confirmed the incident said no life was lost but declined to comment on the whereabouts of the driver and his passengers.

It was gathered that the incident occurred at about 2.34 pm after a tanker had finished loading at North West Petroleum Oil and Gas Company at the zone and was going down the road but suddenly ran into a sharp bend.

Eyewitnesses said the driver was reckless and most likely under the influence of alcohol.

Another witness, Daniel, said, "God is with us otherwise the entire zone would have been razed down as we have many tank farms here. The tanker was carrying PMS and it upturned at the sharp bend. It was just God and the quick intervention of the fire service of the zone otherwise the zone with over 52 companies would have been burnt down."

He said this was the third time trucks have fallen off the road after loading at North West petroleum and "there is need to install speed breakers on that long stretch of road in the zone forestall future occurrence.

"In addition, there should be regulation and road safety training for the truck drivers who are often under the influence of alcohol".

The fire incident destroyed the tanker completely, a police security post, some pipes and few other facilities before the quick intervention of the fire service.

At the North West Petroleum, officials who were hostile to few Journalist that visited the scene of the incident for fact finding declined comment on the matter.

The Human Resources Officer of North West Petroleum who declined to disclose her identity said "the TM

was not disposed for any comment. Please I am not in a position to comment on the matter, you can come on another day".

The Public Relations Officer of the zone Mr. Richard Bassey confirmed the fire incident saying "the fire incident was handled by the best international practice and there was no harm".

Bassey however declined further comment on the matter saying normal investigation has to be carried out before further comments are made on the incident.

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