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## Drugs abuse, bad roads, reckless driving fuelling Oyo Tanker Accidents

By Sam Oluwalana, Ibadan |  
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*Scene of a previous tanker fire incident in Ibadan, which consumed 15*

Oyo State has, in recent times, witnessed many accidents involving articulated vehicles, which have caused varying degrees of damage, in various parts of the state. No thanks

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to the winding slopes and narrow streets that dot parts of the state, especially Ibadan, which makes the state capital, prone to tanker fires.

Unfortunately, these accidents, which have led to immense loss of lives and property worth millions of naira, don't appear to be abating, with the most devastating happening on September 22, 2016, in Ogbomoso township. That particular accident claimed 16 lives, while five others were seriously injured.

In the wake of that incident, it was claimed that the errant driver, who was plying an unauthorised route, lost control of the vehicle while over-speeding.



Sector Commander of the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) in the state, Mr. Yusuf Salami, said tanker drivers are to blame for the incessant accidents.

“Recently, we have had three major tanker accidents in Ogbomoso and Atiba towns in the state. On July 14 and 18, we had two major accidents that resulted in the death of one person, and the loss of five buildings, and several injuries. The one in Atiba involved two vehicles, and it was the driver of one of the tankers that drove recklessly by overtaking his colleague wrongly, and causing a collision in the process.

“Another one happened just four days later and it involved five vehicles. The driver was said to be sleeping while driving. In that incident, five houses were razed, and many other property worth millions of naira lost.

He continued, “The most devastating accident involving about five tankers, happened on September 22, 2016, and it was so shocking, because about 16 people were left dead at the end of the inferno that attended the incident. In that one also, the driver was over-speeding. Here was an accident that could have been prevented.”

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According to Salami, the treacherous topography of the state, and the poor condition of vehicles, are also major contributory factors to these preventable life-consuming incidents.

“There is a clear high density of tankers plying the state, because the state is the gateway to the northern part of the country, and fuel is supplied to the North on a daily basis. The roads are in bad shape, and they are narrow and winding. These present certain challenges to the drivers and their vehicles.

“However, the drivers are to be blamed for majority of these accidents because they hardly observe road signs; they drive under the influence of alcohol at times, and they are reckless too. There is this wrong notion among them that alcohol and drugs, especially marijuana are stimulants that can aid their performances. But these external stimuli only break down their resistance level and are counter-productive in the long run, because they become tired and just like the driver of the vehicle that caused the accident in Ogbomoso, they sleep while driving and lose control of the vehicles,” he explained.

The FRSC chief added that, “All over the world, there are supposed to be two drivers driving a tanker if the vehicle is embarking on a long trip. They are supposed to be equally proficient, and are also supposed to rest for 40 minutes after driving for four hours, while they switch roles every eight hours.

“In Nigeria, you only have a driver taking the tanker through the whole hog and when fatigue sets in, they sleep off, thereby losing control of their vehicles. These have resulted to many accidents and loss of lives and properties.

Their companions are what they call motor boys, who usually flag down other vehicles, or resort to waving at other road users to signify their intentions on the roads, since most of them do not have the requisite trafficators and hazard signs,” he said.

Salami added that the, “tankers are also badly maintained and they lack basic parts like tyres, brakes and other important aids. On our own, we have aggressively attempted to prevent the frequency at which accidents

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occur in the state. Towards the end of last year, we inaugurated a highly efficient operation code named 'Operation Storm.' This was targeted at tanker drivers. We sensitise them on those things that would make them behave rationally, and make the roads safe for other road users. These include, educating them on the dangers of drug taking and driving under the influence of alcohol. We also educate them on how to maintain their vehicles. In the operation, we are adopting a stick and carrot approach in which we arrest errant drivers, while also encouraging those who comply with the rules."

The state Commissioner for Information, Culture and Tourism, Mr. Toye Arulogun, corroborated Salami's views, saying the high tanker density, make up of the state's topography, and state of the roads, were the major factors that precipitate the high rate of tanker accidents.



"Oyo State is the gateway to the northern part of the country, and so we have a lot of tanker traffic on these roads. Naturally, the drivers being who they are, could be reckless, under different influences, and these too contribute to the accidents. The roads at the moment are really not in the right conditions, but this particular challenge is being taken care of immediately, because before the end of the year, the roads from Ibadan to Ogbomoso would have been fixed."

For the state's Chief Fire Officer, Mr. Karrem Oyekunle Kafar, even though his agency deals with the after effect of the accidents, he advised tanker drivers to shun drugs taking and maintain their vehicles adequately.

"We don't usually have any problems with accidents, because we only have to deal with them after they have happened. However, from our experience, I have to advise the drivers to drive defensively and make sure they are equipped with the necessary fire safety gadgets in order to minimise casualties."

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