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Rainstorm kills four, destroys over 80 houses in Rivers

By Ann Godwin, Port Harcourt | 25 January 2017 | 5:35 am



The scene of the fallen electric pole at GRA, Phase 11

Four persons were feared dead and over 80 houses destroyed in Obio/Akpor and some parts of Port Harcourt Local Council of Rivers State following a heavy rainstorm on Monday evening.

It was gathered that the downpour, which began around 4:30p.m. on Monday and lasted about four hours in places like Rumuodumanya, Rumuaholi, Rumosi, Rumokoro, and Mile Three was not witnessed in other parts of the city like Borokiri, Port Harcourt township, Amadi-ama and Abloma.

The Guardian gathered that the first victim was a little girl selling fruits with her mother under an umbrella at Nkpolu junction, close to the Mile Three Market. It was learnt that the little girl and her mother took cover under the umbrella when the rain began, but unfortunately, a thunderstorm struck and pulled down an electric pole which fell on top of the umbrella and hit the little girl on her head, leading to her instant death.

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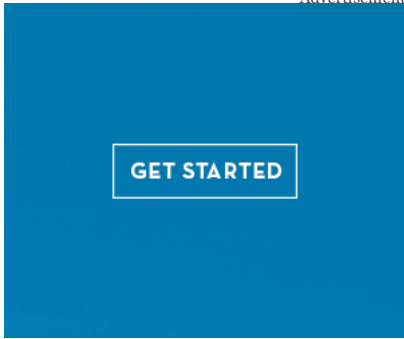
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The rain, which also destroyed buildings, fences and electric poles, reportedly killed another 15-year-old girl and her brother, while their mother escaped unhurt in the Mile Three axis.

Eyewitnesses said a telecoms mast fell from a fenced compound in the University of Continuing Education into a Community Secondary School, located at Mile Three, Diobu in Port Harcourt, killing the duo.

Narrating the ordeal, the mother of the victims, a 45-year-old Mrs. Eucheria Charles, said the mast fell on a pole which ultimately fell on her 15-year-old daughter and the boy, killing them instantly.

Another victim, a man identified as Mr. Coach, was said to have died on his way to the hospital. According to an eyewitness, Mrs. Jesica Odu, “we were on the road before the mast fell. The thing affected a signpost, which both hit the girl. The girl was returning from an errand the mother sent her. The signboard also hit one man known as Coach on his head.”

This is the second rainfall in 2017, though other parts of the city are yet to experience any. The first rain was witnessed last week and it also wreaked havoc on property, but no life was lost.

When The Guardian visited some of the affected areas, some residents, whose houses were submerged, were seen moving their valuables from the flood. They expressed surprise at the destruction that trailed the downpour.

Efforts to speak with the officials of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) were futile as their phones were not reachable. Meanwhile, the Port Harcourt Distribution Electricity Company (PHED) has confirmed that the rainstorm destroyed most of its electric poles, regretting that the incident has led to power outage in some parts of the city.

Spokesman of PHED, John Onyi, said: “Yes, we are aware about the rainstorm, it destroyed most of our property, including electric poles and that has resulted in power outage in some areas, but we are making efforts to fix them back.”

Also speaking on the incident, the Managing Director of the Rivers State Signage and Advertising Agency, Chukwudi Dimkpa, admitted that the poles fell because it had a weak base instead of a more fortified one.

Dimkpa, who spoke when he visited the scene of the disaster, noted that many signage poles in Port Harcourt were not properly maintained, and pledged to intensify efforts to address it.

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