

Sad Independence Day in Delta as five die in tanker fire incident

By Monday Osayande, Asaba

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Fire fighters battling the fire

It was an eerie Independence Day celebration, yesterday, as five persons, including children, pregnant woman, and elders, were burnt alive in a fuel tanker fire incident, which occurred at Oghara, Ethiope West Local Council of Delta State. Eight buses, two fuel-laden tankers, five trucks, two cars and one motorcycle, were also razed in the inferno, which happened around noon.

The Guardian learnt that one of the tankers fell, while manoeuvring a bad spot on Benin-Warri Federal Road, immediately after crossing Ologbo River Bridge, a boundary community between Edo and Delta States.

Although, the cause of the fire could not be immediately ascertained, sources said when the truck fell, some persons in the vicinity started scooping fuel gushing out from one of the compartments.

The source said: “As people rushed to scoop fuel, security personnel and others at the scene attempted to stop the crowd, but they refused to stop, and continued fetching fuel with big containers as if they were fetching water from the stream.”

Confirming the development, spokesperson for Delta State Police Command, Bright Edafe, said five deaths were recorded in the incident. Edafe said: “In the early hours of October 1, at about 2:00 a.m., the Command recorded a tragic incident, where a tanker laden with fuel and driving towards Benin,

along Warri-Benin Road, fell on getting to Ugbenu Koko Junction.

“Its content spilled into the nearby swamp, and the spillage attracted a couple of youths, who took advantage of the incident, and started scooping fuel into jerry cans, and other containers.

“While they were at it, there was a loud explosion, and the fire from the explosion engulfed the whole area.

“The fire claimed the lives of five persons among the youths who had come to scoop the spilled fuel, and also burnt several properties, which include the fallen tanker, eight buses of different types, two tankers, five Trailers, two motorcycles, one Siena space bus, and one ‘C’ Class Mercedes Benz car.

“Due to the fire, the registration numbers of affected vehicles were not clearly visible. At the event of this outburst, the scene was visited, and bodies of the victims were evacuated to Oghara General Hospital’s mortuary.

“In a bid to clear the road of obstructions efforts are being made by the men of Oghara Police Division, in collaboration with the Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC) at Ethiope West Local Council, to ensure free flow of traffic.

“In the light of this tragic incident, the Delta State Police Commissioner (CP), Wale Abass, extends his condolence to the families of those who lost their lives in this unfortunate event.

“He further expressed his displeasure at the inexorable perversity of Nigerians, especially the youths.

“It is sad that we never learn from past occurrences, since this isn’t the first time of such incidents.” He appealed to Nigerians to shun greed and stay away from scenes of oil spillages, as it poses a serious threat to their lives and those of others.

Meanwhile, Governor Sheriff Oborevwori of Delta State has sent his condolences to families of the victims. In a statement by his Chief Press Secretary, Festus Ahon, the Governor commiserated with the victims’ families on the sad incident.

He said the State Emergency Management Agency, led by the Commissioner for Special Duties, Mr Ejiro Terry was already at the scene to provide help and support for the victims.