

Blaze kills one, destroys 45 shops at Enugu auto parts market

By Lawrence Njoku (Enugu), Mansur Aramide (Ilorin) and Murtala Adewale (Kano)

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- Razes 14 shops, property worth over N19m in Ilorin
- Kano fire service investigates inferno at council secretariat

Tragedy struck in Enugu, yesterday, as an official of the State Fire Service, Chigozie Ugwu, lost his life while trying to put out a blaze at the Enugu motor spare parts market, Coal Camp.

The fire razed about 45 shops and destroyed goods worth several millions of naira.

The Guardian learnt that Ugwu, a mechanical engineer, was among the team deployed to stop the fire, which started around 1:10 a.m.

Enugu State Chief Fire Officer, Okwudili Oha, who confirmed the fatality, said the corpse has been deposited at the morgue of the Enugu State University Teaching Hospital (ESUTH).

He revealed that Ugwu collapsed, moments after he and other officials had waged a two-hour battle to stop the fire, adding that officer was pronounced dead on arrival at the hospital.

“He was a dedicated officer, who loved to lead by example. He was my best fire officer. He was not actually supposed to come to work because he was still recuperating from an illness. But due to his passion for the job, he decided to join the team. We have been able to quench the fire. It took more than two hours. It was a huge loss,” Oha said.

Meanwhile, President of Enugu State Motor Spare Parts Dealers Association, Mike Nomeh, confirmed no less than 45 shops stocked with vehicle parts and other goods were affected.

He said the fire started at one of the shops and spread to a neighbouring restaurant that used cooking gas.

Nomeh explained: “I received a call from one of our security men, around midnight, that our market was on fire. Our security men promptly rushed to stop it, when they noticed the fire. But when they got to the shop, they noticed that it was locked and had burglar proof. As they were battling to break into the shop, the fire escalated to the next shop, which operated a restaurant. Immediately, a gas cylinder inside the restaurant exploded, spreading the fire to several shops. When the fire was out of our control, I called the fire service and they promptly arrived in less than 15 minutes.”

He appealed to the state government and well meaning Nigerians to come to the aid of the affected traders.



One of the shop owners, Ikenna Eneh, said: “I lost everything. Not even a pin was removed from my shop. I got the information last night that the shop was on fire. When I got here, I could not find a way to enter because of the thick smoke. It is really sad and unfortunate.”

Also, about 14 shops were razed in two incidents in the Tanke area of Ilorin, Ilorin South Local Council of Kwara State, between Tuesday evening and the early hours of yesterday.

The Guardian learnt that at about 6:00 p.m., on Tuesday, seven shops at Zion Overcomer, Opposite Duro Suleiman House, University Road, Tanke, were burnt.

The second incident, which destroyed seven shops, occurred at the Tanke Oke-Odo area, also on University Road, at about 1.30 a.m., yesterday.

The cause of both infernos was attributed to power surge in the area.

The Kwara State Fire Service said its men rushed to the scenes of the two incidents and saved several shops.

Head, Media and Publicity, Kwara State Fire Service, Hassan Adekunle, said the service “doused an intense fire outbreak on Tuesday, December 12, 2023...The firefighting operations concluded at 18:11 hours. Out of the 17 shops in the building, seven were affected by a burning fire. The total estimated property lost is N19.3 million while the total estimated property saved is N79.5 million. However, there was no record of casualty of any sort.”

He added: “In the early hour of Wednesday, December 13, 2023, at approximately 01:30 hour, the Kwara State Fire Service promptly responded to a fire incident at University Road, Tanke Oke-Odo. Upon arrival, our firefighters effectively extinguished the fire that engulfed 16 metal kiosks and affected seven shops.”

Director of the agency, Falade Olumuyiwa, advised the general public to be safety conscious, especially during the ongoing harmattan, and call the fire service whenever there was an emergency.

Meanwhile, spokesperson of the Kano State Fire Service, Nasiru Yusuf, said investigation will be launched to ascertain the cause of a fire, yesterday, at the Gwale Local Council secretariat, in Kano metropolis.

No life was lost during the incident.

Speaking with journalists, the council chairman, Khalis Ishaq Diso, said the blaze destroyed property worth millions.

Commissioner of Police, Mohammad Gumel, said the outbreak torched three offices: Community Development, Works, and Audit Departments.

He added that an investigation was ongoing to determine the cause.