

# Passengers, traders feared dead in Rivers boat fire

By Obinna Nwaoku, Port Harcourt

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*Scene of the incident*

An unspecified number of traders and passengers were feared killed, while goods and property worth millions of naira were destroyed, following a fire that gutted three passenger boats in Rivers State.

The Guardian learnt that the incident happened on Monday evening at the popular Bonny/Nembe/Bille jetty in Port Harcourt City Local Council of the state.

The fire reportedly started from the engine of one of the wooden boats which was undergoing maintenance, then spread quickly to the other boats.

An eyewitness, who pleaded anonymity, said a technician had been trying to fix the faulty engine. She said while this was ongoing, there was a spark that ignited some jerry cans loaded with suspected adulterated fuel used in operating the boat. According to her, the fire quickly became uncontrollable and spread to two nearby boats, trapping the occupants.

“They tried to put it out. But because it was fuel, it was difficult to extinguish. Everyone started running out of the boat. Before we knew it, we heard an explosion while so many people were still inside the boat,” she added.

A trader, whose goods were destroyed in the fire, said the boat was preparing to travel to a fishing settlement in Bayelsa State. She said she narrowly escaped, adding that one woman who left the boat to buy some items returned to discover that her three children could not be found.