

Two dead, five injured in Otedola gas explosion

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Scene of the fire incident yesterday. PHOTO: ENIOLA DANIEL

• Woman lost two shops, money to fire

It was a tragic day for pedestrians and motorists as two people were confirmed dead in the tragic gas explosion, which occurred Tuesday night around Otedola area of Lagos.

The 30 tonnes DAF truck without registration number, laden with Automated Gas Oil (AGO) fell on its side while negotiating a bend inward Omole. The ensuing fire consumed everything in its way, spreading almost 100 metres, leaving many injured.

The Guardian gathered that 12 vehicles, eight tricycles and a building were destroyed by the incident, which occurred at about 8:00p.m. on Tuesday. Eyewitnesses said the gas truck enroute Berger, suffered a brake failure and collided with a mini-bus discharging passengers. Tragically, a mechanic simply referred to as Rotimi was burnt to death while trying to drive away a customer's car from the danger.

According to an eyewitness account, Rotimi had sent one of his apprentices to check the cause of the traffic logjam around the Otedola under bridge. On getting there, the boy ran back to him to ask everyone to leave due to gas leakage from the truck, but Rotimi rushed into a customer's car to drive away and was caught in the fire and burnt to death.

"Three other bodies were also discovered in the gutter yesterday morning," he said. Speaking at the scene of the incident yesterday, an auto mechanic, Tope Sola, said: "Three bodies were discovered inside the gutter this morning when we got here. A woman roasting corn narrowly escaped being burnt but his sister could not make it out alive.

"Oga Rotimi was in his Corolla when the incident happened but he came out to rescue his client's Highlander before he was caught in the fire.

Also, a businesswoman, Tawa Kareem, who lost two shops in the inferno, said she ran inside the swampy area to escape from the fire.

"I just finished loading my goods worth N400,000 when the fire broke out. Both goods and the drink I bought were consumed in the fire. My car was also burnt in the fire.

"I am a widow and this tragedy broke when I was recovering from the death of my husband. I could not recover anything from the fire and I could not run away with the money I had in the shop.

"I ran inside the swampy area alongside others. "I need help, the government and Nigerians should come to my aid." Lamenting the incident, the General Manager of the Lagos State Transport

Management Authority (LASTMA), Olalekan Bakare-Oki, stressed the importance of prioritising safety.

According to him, there are conflicting reports as to what could have caused this kind of explosion. Oki stressed that the agency has engaged in a massive and aggressive advocacy for all tankers and truckers in the state to make sure that they prioritise safety at all times.

According to him, there is the need for drivers and tank owners to always do routine repair and maintenance of the vehicle.

“And in case of fatigue on the part of the driver, they should be able to rest and make sure that the lives of others are equally of utmost importance,” he added.

Meanwhile, the Lagos State Emergency Management Agency (LASEMA) has confirmed that two persons died and six others sustained injuries in the gas tanker explosion.

Giving an update on the incident yesterday, the Permanent Secretary (PS) LASEMA, Dr Femi Oke-Osanyintolu said the deceased were both male adults.

Meanwhile, Lagos State Commissioner for Transport, Mr Oluwaseun Osiyemi sympathised with those affected, just as he commended the swift response of emergency services working tirelessly to manage the aftermath.

Osiyemi said the incident reinforces the urgent need for stricter safety protocols for heavy-duty vehicles. He noted that the ministry of transportation is also intensifying enforcement on the movement of hazardous materials, strengthening regulatory compliance, and implementing enhanced safety measures to prevent future occurrences.

Also, the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) said rescue reports show that the crash involved 11 males, five of which were injured while two were killed.

The FRSC Public Education Officer, Olusegun Ogungbemide, said the crash which involved 15 vehicles was alleged to have occurred as a result of mechanical deficiency manifested through brake failure.

He said the Corps Marshal, FRSC, Shehu Mohammed, called on all fleet managers to make safety precautions a priority in fleet management. Mohammed, he said, warned against neglecting necessary safety measures, stressing that appropriate sanctions will continue to be meted out to the drivers and vehicle owners who compromise safety to the detriment of other road users.