

Petrol storage tank fire kills two in Delta community

By : Chido Okafor, Warri Date: 11 Jul 2025 Share :



Boats drenched in fuel at Koko waterfronts

Anxiety has gripped a section of Koko community in Warri North Local Council of Delta State as residents fled to safe locations following a major spill and fire in one of the huge fuel storage tanks at a depot operated by Sharon Petroleum Nigeria Limited.

The spill from the tank, according to residents, could not be contained by the firm, and spread into nearby living areas in Koko, igniting a massive fire that sent people scrambling in every direction.

The market in the vicinity was suddenly deserted as market women left their wares behind and ran for dear lives.

Stench of petrol permeated Koko community compelling people to flee, due to the fear of an imminent explosion.

Two young men, according to a community source, died onboard a boat on their way home. Others on the same boat were rushed to the hospital due to suffocation from the petrol fumes that enveloped the air.

Koko residents said the fuel spillage could not be contained, as the firm reportedly lacked facilities to evacuate the product from the leaking tank, resulting in flames filling the air with thick smoke.

They disclosed that a lot of people were directly affected and suffered stomach pain, nasal blockage, incessant coughing and itchy eyes. They also said the spillage killed many sea foods, which were found floating in large quantities on the water.

Friday Oritsegbemi, the community's town crier, said he was about to go out with his wife for their fishing routine about 2.00a.m. As they approached the river, they were overwhelmed by the suffocating smell of petrol, forcing them to retreat.

He stated that at about 4.00a.m., an employee of Sharon Petroleum, who was close to him, informed him to announce to the entire Koko community not to set fire or use any inflammable object because the company's facility had failed, thereby spilling oil into the river.

An aged woman, Mama Ebeye Lawalogun Oritsematosan, said the fuel leakage caused her illness, and that no relief or compensation had come to her.

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She said her children brought a medical doctor to her house to treat her, and since then, her cough and stomach pain worsened.

The Foundation for Earth Rights Assembly (FERA), which visited the scene to ascertain the level of response by government comprising the Ministry of Environment, National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency (NOSDRA) and National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (NESRA), said the impacted victims felt neglected.

FERA's team led by the Executive Director, Nosa Tokunbor, said the victims, who live and fish within the location of the company's facility at Aja – Olugbeti, complained of failing health and damage to their sources of livelihood.

The Head of Koko town, Nana Anthony Olaraja, said the incident had been brought under control, as the stench had been adequately controlled by the company.

He, however, pointed out that the stench from the spillage was almost seizing the breath of people in the community.

Olaraja was corroborated by the Chairman of Koko Community Management Authority (KCMA), Dr Chris Eburajolo, who also said the incident had been contained.

Delta State Commissioner for Oil and Gas, Peter Uviejitobor, who visited the scene of the incident and met stakeholders, said he was on a fact-finding mission.

According to Eburajolo, after meeting with all stakeholders, the commissioner called for calm, saying that the government would get to the root of the incident.