

Three Die From Chlorine Fume In Cross River

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At least three persons, among them an aged woman, have lost their lives in New Netim in Odukpani Local Government Area of Cross River State following the escape of chlorine fumes from cylinders used by the Cross River State Water Board (CRSWB).

Several others, including a serving member of the National Youths Service Corps (NYSC), are lying critically ill in various hospitals in the state capital, Calabar.

Apart from the human lives affected by the release of the Chlorine fumes, some domestic and wild animals also died after inhaling the toxic fumes. Plants and farmlands that came under the lethal effect of the chemical withered were not spared.

The accident, which occurred in the night of Wednesday, July 5, 2007 has been described as a normal industrial accident by the authorities of the CRSWB, who said only an elderly woman died as a result of the accident.

It is the second time in two months that concentrated chlorine fumes have been released into the atmosphere from the facilities of the CRSWB.

On May 11, this year residents of Ikon Inok, Ediba, and the State Housing Estate in Calabar experienced a similar situation when the same substance was released into the atmosphere from the water treatment plant of the CRSWB located at Ediba/

Marian Road axis of Calabar.

Deputy director, Administration/Public Relations of CRSWB, Mr. Mark Uma Echege, when confronted by journalists at the weekend, confirmed that the accident occurred as a result of the escape of chlorine fumes from one of the 24 cylinders that contained the chemical.

Echege said the accident occurred when the fumes escaped from one of the cylinders in the process of neutralising the effect of the chemical as a result of power failure, as the generator they were using to pump water suddenly developed problems and went off.

Echege said neutralising of the chemical was contracted to a qualified chemist from Pfizer, adding that the expert had succeeded in neutralising 22 cylinders before the accident.

He said the only person that is receiving treatment in the hospital is a member of the NYSC serving in the area.

But sources in the community told journalists in Calabar that no fewer than three persons lost their lives as a result of the accident.

Echege said the CRSWB had already started talks with members of the community and the authorities of the Odukpani council with a view to compensate affected persons and family members of the deceased.

He also said compensation would be paid by the CRSWB for crops and farmland destroyed as a result of the accident.

Reconciliation: Okunaga