

SIX KILLED IN EBONYI, EDO AUTO CRASHES

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•1,487 killed, 6,831 injured in auto crashes in six months – *Chidoka*

By Felix Uka (Abakaliki), Jude Ehebha (Ekpoma) and Chibuzor Emejor (Abuja)

Four people were crushed to death in a fatal auto crash involving a Mazda Infinity car and a Mercedes truck on the Abakaliki-Afikpo Expressway in the Ezza South Local Government area of Ebonyi State on Wednesday.

The two vehicles were said to have had a head-on collision at the Onueke axis of the expressway.

One other person reportedly sustained severe injuries.

Ebonyi State Commandant of the Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC), Jide Fehintola, confirmed the accident.

Fehintola said the accident resulted from a burst tyre.

The FRSC chieftain said the bodies of dead had been deposited at the Federal Teaching Hospital Mortuary, Abakaliki, while the injured victim was receiving treatment in an undisclosed hospital.

"There was a road traffic crash involving two vehicles. One Mazda Infinity car, green in colour with registration number AG 727 KTS and another Mercedes truck.

"The dead were three men and one female," Fehintola said.

Fehintola advised road users to avoid over speeding, especially now that they have entered the 'ember' season, to avoid further loss of lives.

Another report on Wednesday said two cousins were killed in Uromi, Esan North East Local Government Area of Edo State, in an accident involving a trailer and a motorcycle.

The trailer was said to have run over the motorcycle with its back tyre, crushing the occupants to death.

The accident occurred in front of St. Anthony Catholic Church along the busy Mission Road.

The truck driver allegedly took to his heels to escape being lynched while angry youths set the truck ablaze.

An eyewitness told *Daily Independent* that the trailer crushed the victims while trying to avoid crashing into a vehicle that was joining the road from the Catholic church.

In the process, it ran over the motorcycle rider and passenger, whom *Daily Independent* gathered are cousins.

Divisional Police Officer (DPO) for Uromi, Shaibu Audu, confirmed the incident, saying investigation was already on-going.

He declined further comments but referred newsmen to the police image maker in Benin City instead.

In a related development, Corps Marshal of the FRSC, Osita Chidoka, has announced that 1,437 people were killed and 6,831 others injured in various road traffic crashes across Nigeria from January to June 2013.

Chidoka, who disclosed this on Wednesday at a sensitisation programme on speed limiting devices in Abuja, said from records, a total of 1,397 buses were involved in road crashes within the period.

He said speed was responsible for 65 per cent of road crashes in Nigeria.

According to him, "From extensive investigations and analysis of commuter vehicles carried out by the FRSC over a six-year period (2007—2012), it was found that the frequencies of crashes involving Toyota Hiace buses was a total of 1,844 crashes.

"While it is important to note that Toyota Hiace brand is the dominant brand in the commuter bus category, we still hold the view that the crashes recorded are unacceptable.

"It is on record that Toyota Hiace YH3 make were recalled in Australia as a result of fire in 1990 and recently in 2012," Chidoka said.

"The Corps has therefore written to the Managing Director of Toyota to bring this menace to their attention and also recommend that drivers and owners of Toyota Hiace buses install speed limiting devices in their vehicles and obey stipulated speed limits while plying our roads."

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