

Generator Fume Kills Seven In Imo, Over 34 Family Members Hospitalised

By **Christian Nwokocho** - June 11, 2019

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OWERRI – Umuegbu village in Umuomumu Mbieri Community, Mbaitoli Local Government Area of Imo State, was thrown into mourning in the early hours of Monday as a result of the death of seven members of a family from generator fume.

Thirty-four persons also took ill and were hospitalised after a traditional marriage the previous day in the same compound.

It was not clear if the twins in Jude Uzoegbu's family who slept in the same house and two pregnant women were among those who died on their way to two different hospitals, but the community leader in the area, Chief Martins Ezuruike, confirmed that he saw victims who were dead and others in critical condition.

While four persons were confirmed dead at Uzoegbu's house and about 30 victims taken to an unidentified hospital at Nworiubi, being the local government headquarters of Mbaitoli, other

victims, numbering 20, were taken to Ikeduru Hospital, known as Imo International Health Systems.

Three persons were confirmed dead by the hospital administrator, Dr Austin Agbahiwe.

Chief Ezuruike narrated the story. He said: "I know that after the traditional marriage some people did not go home.

"They all slept in one building, about 20 persons. The generator, which they were using during the ceremony, was taken inside the building where these people were sleeping for more than 12 hours and was still on till this morning.

"When a member of the compound wanted to talk to one of his brothers who also slept in the same house, the brother couldn't respond.

"He wondered and went there with some people, yet nobody responded except the generator that was steaming.

"They had to use force to open the door and they saw people lying on the floor, about twenty of them.

"The man whose daughter was involved in the marriage was among those that died.

"The secretary to Mbieri Oke Union called me and we went there to see things. I called my younger brother to send my vehicle to enable us take them to hospital.

"Ambulance police was involved in evacuating them. Police have already evacuated about 15 victims out of the house before I got to the scene.

"Even when I got to that point, I saw about eight lying on the floor. Some were given first aid. The people that wedded had already gone and were not affected in the fume accident."

The rightful owner of the house where the traditional marriage was held, Ezuruike, said: "We know the man from that same family is dead a year ago and yet to be buried.

"Therefore, anybody who is associating this tragedy to cultural attack or vindictiveness is not saying the truth. I see this problem as a mark of carelessness. He was the village head.

Dr Austin Agbahiwe, the administrator of Imo International Health Systems, Ikeduru, said: “This morning we had an emergency in the hospital. Twenty generator fume victims were brought by the policemen and they were unconscious and, by the time they arrived in the hospital, three of them were already dead.

“We have team of doctors who are really battling to save the rest of the 17 victims. They are already on oxygen with a view to revive them.

“Preliminary finding was that they inhaled a poisonous gas from a generator. For now, our primary responsibility is to save life. We are yet to identify all of them, and we are working to see if the matter was beyond generator fume.”

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