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P/HARCOURT

Scores of persons were feared dead as a petrol pipeline exploded in Rumuekpe community, Emuoha Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Eye witness in the community said the incident occurred when some youths were siphoning petroleum products from some company pipelines, located on the stretch of the adjourning villages within the community.

A resident of the community who identified himself as Godwin said that the area was notorious for oil bunkering activities, saying the youths attempted to cut one of the petroleum pipelines operated by

Many Feared Dead As Pipeline Explodes In Rivers Community

an oil firm.

He alleged that over 15 persons may have died in the explosion, saying many community residents had come out to catch a glimpse of the burnt victims.

"More than 20 persons died in that very incident. The particular place where this incident occurred is very notorious for bunkering activities. Youths from various communities gathered there to carry out the illicit act.

"The place is the centre of oil bunkering activities. There are so many oil, petrol and gas

pipeline that crisscross the community. The pipelines are owned by some multinational oil companies.

"The NLNG also have their gas pipeline crisscross along the stretch of the community. Those involved in these criminal activities may have ruptured petrol pipeline which ignited fire and burnt to death so many persons.

"This incident may have affected many families from the neighbouring communities as many youths involved in it comes from different community," he said.

Responding, the spokesman of the state police command, Nnamdi Omoni confirmed the incident, but said he was yet to get the actual casualty figure.

"Well, I can confirm the fire incident in Emuoha. But I can't say the number of casualties for now. However, some persons who sustained burns have been moved to a medical facility.

"Our men have been drafted there to ensure there was no breakdown of law and order. Calm has been restored and there is no cause for alarm," he stated.