

# 80 burnt to death in tanker inferno in Anambra

**A**BOUT 80 persons were yesterday burnt to death while several others sustained serious degrees of burn at Umunya in Oyi Council Area of Anambra State when a petroleum tanker exploded and set over eight vehicles ablaze. The vehicles included five 18-seated buses fully loaded with passengers.

The incident happened when a tanker carrying fuel fell into a ditch in a failed portion of the Onitsha/Enugu expressway close to Odumodu junction.

According to eyewitnesses, the tanker, which was going to Enugu, was trapped in a deep porthole before it fell and emptied its content on the road at about noon.

The source, who spoke to journalists at the scene of the accident that was littered with charred remains of victims of the ghastly accident, who were burnt beyond recognition, disclosed that the tanker exploded when a mobile policeman who manned a nearby checkpoint fired a shot into the air apparently to stop other road users

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and the natives who were gathering around the fallen truck from scooping fuel.

"Immediately the policeman shot into the air, the tanker burst into flame that engulfed other vehicles that were close by and also trapped some of the people that were gathered around the scene who were not fast enough to escape," the source said.

However, another source said the tanker exploded around 1:45pm because of the intensity of the sun.

Another reliable source, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said one of the buses that were completely burnt with its 18 passengers, was a school bus that was carrying school children, lamenting that, "It was a horrific experience because we were standing nearby and could do nothing while these little children were burnt to ashes due to the level of heat that was coming from the fire."

Speaking to newsmen at the scene of the accident, the Sector

Head of Operations of the Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC), Anambra State Command, Ben Ekenna, blamed the accident on the deplorable nature of the road, adding that if nothing was done about the failed portions of the road, incidents like this were bound to happen.

"Something should be done about this road and fast too, if not, the lives of commuters and other road users are in great danger," Ekenna said.

Other passersby who were weeping uncontrollably at the scene protested when a construction company attempted to clear the road of the burnt vehicles, saying that the vehicles should be left there for people to see what the Federal Government had done to the people as it was because of its indifference to the plight of the people that the inferno occurred.

The people noted that this was not the first time a tanker loaded with fuel would fall on that particular spot, but it was unfortunate that this one exploded, killing over 80 persons.