

# 3 killed, 39 vehicles burnt in Lagos tanker explosion

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Carcasses of some of the burnt vehicles caused by a petrol tanker explosion in Mile 2 Oke Park, Amuwo-Odofin, Lagos, which occurred early Saturday morning. Photo: OLUSEGUN RAPHEAL

THREE people dead.

Thirty-nine charred cars and buses. Heavy pall of smoke hanging in the air. Passers-by and sympathisers in tears.

That was the story of the popular Mile Two Oke, Lagos, yesterday after a 33,000litre fuel tanker

exploded at about 1am and

triggered a fire. A first timer at the terminus could be forgiven if he mistook it for a recent battle front.

The tanker with registration number XB370ATN, according to an eye witness who gave his name simply as Kazeem, had fallen on its side and exploded.

It was said to have lost one of its tyres and instead of the driver to stop and rectify the problem he kept going.

Kazeem who claimed to have escaped death by the whiskers in the accident said: "We were more than 20 people at the park at the time, because most of us plying intra state routes leave quite early and most of the time we sleep in the park to enable us take off early.

"I had just finished eating with some other people in the park here when we noticed that the tanker had a problem. I quickly ran up to the driver to stop as one of the tyres was off. I advised him to stop while I get people to help."

He said the tanker driver ignored his plea and kept moving. Within seconds it fell on its side and exploded.

"I just heard a loud sound behind me and when I turned I saw fire. It was so bad that all I could do was rush to the park to alert those who were sleeping and we all ran out of the place," he said.

He said the three people that died were fast asleep and were trapped in the inferno that took a team of the State Fire Service several hours to put out.

The scene still oozed with the smell of burnt human flesh and vehicles last night.

Many of the commercial drivers who parked their vehicles there after close of work on Friday returned yesterday to find the burnt remains of their sources of livelihood.

Dr. Oluwafemi Oke-Osanyintolu, General Manager, Lagos State Emergency Management Agency (LASEMA) and Disaster Manager, said the petrol tanker which was enroute Oshodi from Mile 2, spilled its content while trying to manoeuvre.

His words: "Although investigation is still going on, we were able to curtail the situation. However, we had three mortalities in this disaster. All the dead people have been moved to the mortuary. We have 36 vehicles involved. Thank God that it did not spread because all the stakeholders important in managing emergency were on ground including men of the Fire Service coordinated by the LASEMA."

The Unit Secretary of the park, Tunde Raji and other officials of the drivers union spent much of yesterday condoling those who lost their vehicles.

He attributed the cause of the accident to impatience often associated with drivers of articulated vehicles plying the route.

He said: "One of our members was telling him to be patient so that they could assist him but he refused to listen. Soon afterward the tanker exploded."

Mr. Fred Obroh, the manager of Ufuoma Transport Service said a driver named Michael Ohwosafa, from Delta State, had to be restrained from jumping into his burning bus. Ohwofasa had taken a loan of N2.8m to procure the bus.

A distraught Ohwosafa told The Nation in an emotion-laden voice: "All I know is that, suddenly I heard a sound as the tanker upturned. I only had third party insurance. I don't know how to face this condition I find myself now."

Some of the drivers succeeded in manoeuvring their cars to safety even in the midst of the confusion.

One of the unlucky ones was Ayodele Adewuyi, a driver with Uyi

Line.

Adewuyi had just parked his bus after a journey from Port-Harcourt but could not take it out of the danger zone when the fire started.

A total of eight Toyota Hiace mini buses were lost to the inferno. A unit is estimated at N6million. Also burnt were two Space wagons, eight LT buses, a towing vehicle and 16 salon cars.

An eye-witness confirmed that the charred remains of the accident victims were taken to the mortuary in an ambulance at about 3.am.

One of the deceased was an NURTW official said to be sleeping inside the union's office while the other two were a driver and an attendant in the park. His name was given as Alayinla.

One of the early callers at the scene of the accident yesterday was the Vice Chairman of Amuwo-Odofin Local Government, Alhaja Qudrat Omolara Dada, who said the council mobilised nine fire fighting trucks to quell the inferno.

The Lagos State Police Public Relations Officer, Mr. Jaiyeoba Joseph, a Superintendent of Police, who confirmed the incident in a text message to The Nation correspondent said: "The accident occurred around 0100hours when a petrol tanker with registration No. XB370ATN heading to Mile 11 from Orile-Iganmu, Lagos, upturned and spilled its content, leading to inferno which claimed three lives and burnt 39 vehicles, mostly commercial buses with the driver still at large."

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