

CITYBEATS

Six die, many injur

SIX persons were killed and scores injured yesterday when two gas plants went up in flames in Magodo and Badagry, Lagos.

Two persons died and eight others were injured in the Magodo explosion. Four were killed and scores injured in the Badagry incident.

Witnesses blamed leakages for the incidents at Second Coming Nigeria Limited Gas Plant on CMD Road, Magodo and a shop on Iluda Road, Ajara Vevho. According to them, emission from the exhaust of a passing vehicle caused the Magodo explosion.

The Badagry explosion while the shop owners were offloading cooking gas around 9am.

Vehicles, six buildings near the shop and six gas cylinders were destroyed in the explosion.

The Nation gathered that two of the victims were apprentice hairdressers. A commercial motorcyclist and a passenger, who were standing in front of the shop were among the injured.

The explosion was said to have broken the walls of the shop and other nearby shop. Human flesh littered the scene.

Officials of the Federal Fire Service, Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), police and other security agencies were on ground to control the situation.

A fire official, Mr Tunde Adeboye, told the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) that they were able to put out the fire to reduce collateral damage.

A senior police officer, who pleaded not to be named, said four persons died in the explosion.

A survivor, Mr Segun Adebunmi, told NAN: "It's a testimony that I'm alive as I escaped the scene by whisks".

An eyewitness, Mr Tope Alabi, said the explosion destroyed cars parked on the street.

"I heard a loud bang and the glasses of cars were shattering and the next thing I saw were human parts littering the whole place.

"The security agencies responded promptly; so the situation was contained; so it didn't escalate," he said.

A senior official at the General Hospital, Badagry, who asked not to be named, confirmed that four bodies had been deposited

By Robert Egbe, Opeyemi Samuel and Olatunde Odebiyi

in the mortuary. He added that several others suffered severe burns.

Destroyed in the Magodo explosion were three gas reservoir tanks, a 33,000-litre gas truck, the gas plant's administrative block, a generating set, cylinders and other equipment.

Officials of Federal and Lagos State Fire Services and Lagos State Emergency Management Agency (LASEMA) battled the fire for three hours.

An official of the plant, who gave his name as Onyekachi, said the value of the property destroyed was "huge."

He said: "There was an explosion and we were called. On arrival here, we had to put everything under control. Explosion can be caused by anything in a gas plant environment. In a gas plant environment, anything can happen. There were casualties but they were rushed to the hospital by the FRSC. The property lost is huge."

According to an eyewitness, the explosion was preceded by the smell of leaking gas since Sunday night.

Lagos State Commissioner of Police (CP) Edgal Imohimi, who arrived on the scene around 11:30am, said the fire was caused by a spark from a vehicle.

He said: "Those that can be rescued have been rescued. We had two casualties, from what I've just been briefed. We still have to evacuate here like I advised LASEMA because there is a possibility of a secondary explosion. LASEMA agrees with me and that's why we will not stay here too long talking for the safety of everyone here."

"We are trying to evacuate all the neighbours here, those staying around, because if you heard what sparked off the explosion in the first instance, it was a spark from the main road that sparked off the explosion right inside the premises, so you can see that the place is not safe."

"So, when we leave now, experts will go in and when experts go in, they will check one or two things before further activities can go on here."

LASEMA General Man-



•Fire fighters and some residents at the Badagry explosion scene... yesterday

“I heard a loud bang and the glasses of cars were shattering and the next thing I saw were human parts littering the whole place”

ager Adesina Tiamiyu said two charred bodies were found at the back of the plant's fence; eight others, with different degrees of burns, were found in the compound.

He said they were given first aid, adding that two survivors with "severe burns" were rushed to the Accident and Trauma Centre, at the old toll gate.

Assuring Magodo residents of their safety, he said LASEMA officials would not leave the scene until they were sure everything was alright.

He said: "For now, we want to tell residents of Magodo that they are safe and we will not have a reignition of this fire here. We are sure it is completely safe, that's why we still have four fire trucks here on stand by."

"Preliminary investigation by the agency revealed

“Unfortunately two burnt bodies were recovered behind the fence of the gas station, while eight persons with various degrees of burns and injuries...”

that three reservoir tanks for storage of gas and one 33,000 litre truck in the gas station were engulfed in fire from a secondary explosion within the gas station.

"Unfortunately two burnt bodies were recovered behind the fence of the gas station, while eight persons with various degrees of burns and injuries were attended to by officials of the Lagos State Ambulance Service and the agency's paramedics before moving two with more degrees of burns to the trauma centre, toll gate for further medical attention."

According to Tiamiyu, men of Lagos State Fire Service with four trucks and the LASEMA Response Unit (LRU) Fire Unit with two trucks prevented the fire from spreading to adjoining buildings.

Other emergency responders on the scene included Rapid Response

Squad (RRS), FRSC, National Emergency Management Agency, Lagos Neighbourhood Safety Corps, Red Cross, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, Lagos State Traffic Management Authority (LASTMA) and the Federal Fire Service.

Tiamiyu said the situation was under control, with the perimeter of the vicinity secured. He added that people had been evacuated from the scene.

He said power supply to the area had been isolated to avoid any other incident.

Tiamiyu said an investigation would be conducted to ascertain the cause of the fire and to prevent a recurrence.

A resident, Humbe Barns, said the smell of gas was strong in the early yesterday. Barns said his kinsman was one of those injured.

Speaking in a mixture of English and pidgin, he claimed that the explosion occurred after the fire fighters' arrival.

Barns said: "Early in the morning, like six o'clock like this, as I rise up this morning, I just hear the smell of gas, smell everywhere. When I come outside I come dey ask say wetin dey smell like this? I come see that some workers dey working inside this company. My brother is also one among the workers dem. So I ask him. He say this thing started yesterday evening, the gas is almost to burst. So, that's why smell dey everywhere. This early morning dey

begin to tell everyone that everyone should not stay around, even cars, they were stopping cars so that cars should not pass around here. So, within small time, I see some fire brigade, fire service were around. Then by then, they started trying to control so that the gas will not explode, then by trying to draw their materials that they used to quench fire, then the thing just burst! Fire. Before the fire start they were just saying gas is almost to burst, burst; nothing cause the fire. I no know wetin cause the fire."

According to him, the explosion was so powerful that it pushed his kinsman away.

He said: "My brother dey dey work there injure. You know as the thing burst if not by the grace of God, himself for burn inside, but the thing push am throwaway. They carry him and one guy dey the thing affect, but I no know where them dey. I just dey call am my brother, I no know his name. I just know say he dey work there and we be friends. We dey speak the same language, from the same place but we no be family."

Barns also claimed that about four fire fighters were injured.

He added: "I see wey dem carry one person who faint, but the man never die. For inside they were three wey dey injured, apart from the Fire Brigade members. For the Fire Brigade members wey get injury, those I see, they were almost four, those I see with my eyes. Dem say the gas start to leak in the evening time, around 5pm, that's what they say."

Lagos to arraign 30 cart pushers

Man 'snatches' N1.1m from bank customer