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Lagos motorist kills 5 street cleaners

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NOT less than five Street cleaners employed by the Lagos State Government lost their lives as a result of reckless driving by motorists and stray bullets recently during a gun duel between armed robbers and Policemen in the state.

A total of 15 people who clean the highways in the state are presently receiving medical treatment as a result of various degrees of injuries sustained while on duty in the State.

The Managing Director of the state Waste Management Authority (LAWMA), Dr. Ola Oresanya disclosed this to newsmen at the ongoing three-day workshop with the theme: safety of highway cleaners: responsibility of all; at the Adeyemi Bero state auditorium, Alausa Ikeja.

According to Oresanya, two people were killed by the stray bullets during crossfire between Police and armed robbers at inner Surulere in Surulere Local Council Development Area (LCDA) while another three were ran over by reckless motorists at different points in the state.

Oresanya stated that the fatal accidents were recorded

cleaners

at the initial conception of the street cleaning project in 2008 when LAWMA decided to extend the programme that was then a pilot scheme to the whole state.

He explained that two sweepers were killed at inner Surulere in 2008 when there was a gun duel between the Police and some armed robbers in May 2008, recalling, "We had lost five street sweepers to fatal accidents and 15 others sustained minor injuries at the beginning of the programme."

The LAWMA boss said the incident made the LAWMA and the state government to embark on measures that eventually prevented further loss of highway cleaners in the state, saying, "We then decided on the green uniform which has greatly reduced incidences."

Lamenting the vulnerability of the highway cleaners, Oresanya explained that the state decided to put up the all-encompassing workshop where various stakeholders like: men of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW), commercial motorcycles operators (Okada), Road

Transport Employers Association of Nigeria (RTEAN) and operators of Private Sector Participation (PSP) scheme were invited to brainstorm on the safety of the street cleaners.

Noting that his authority has insurance for every sweeper in the state, he however expressed that there is nothing like staying alive to enjoy whatever effort injected into life, adding, "aside the insurance, we also design conspicuous C-Caution and very bright uniform for our sweepers so that they could be noticed even from 1,000 metres distance."

He explained that the state government has presently engaged 10,000 street sweepers who covers 114 kilometre stretch, but needs 25,000 to cover the approximately 400 metres' state length and to be able to create the targeted jobs.

Speaking in the same vein, Governor Babatunde Fashola through his commissioner for environment, Dr. Muiz Banire pleaded with all and sundry to be lenient with streets sweepers whose service he said has improved the living and environmental awareness of all and sundry.