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AT least nine persons were feared dead following a
boat mishap Saturday at the Abonema Wharf

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Bakana Creek, Degema local government area of
Rivers State.

Our correspondent learnt that 25 passengers
were on board the boat which was on its way to
Bakana when the incident occurred. While 15
persons were reportedly rescued, 9 persons were
still unaccounted for as at the time of filing in this
report.

Tony Filmore, Chairman of Degema local
government area confirmed the report of the
mishap saying that he had ordered an immediate
investigation into the incident and commiserated
with families of the victims of the boat mishap.



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The Chairman of the Abonema Wharf Community
Development Committee, Taribo Benson told
journalists that most of the victims were headed for
Bakana for a burial ceremony when the incident
occurred.

He blamed the accident on possible overloading of
the boat or recklessness on the part of the driver
noting that many of them always try to undermine
safety procedures.



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He said: "From Abonema Wharf you get a boat to Bakana. There was a young boy whose burial was billed at Bakana, they boarded the boat and in the course of the journey, the boat capsized. They were over 25 passengers and they have only seen 15 persons who are alive, the rest are feared to have drowned".

He advised marine police to arrest the boat driver for questioning saying; "as a marine operator you must equip your boat, avoid overloading. Those are the things the marine police are supposed to be checking".

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"Every boat, after inspection they know the number of passengers it can carry and every passenger must be on lifevest so that if it happens like that you will be struggling to save yourself before rescue will come. But if there is no lifevest whether you know how to swim or not it would be difficult. I don't know what the Marine Police is doing whether the driver has been arrested. Normally when it happens like that the driver of the boat will be arrested. This will give the Marine Police take charge of what they are supposed to do to secure passengers along the waterways", the CTC Chairman stated.



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