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Tragedy as generator fume kills man, family members

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THE effects of the erratic power supply in the country come in different shapes. That many have



Antai

experienced a lull in their businesses as a result of inadequate electricity supply is an aspect of the consequences that is bearable. Even when many Nigerians groan pains of the heat emanating from the current hot weather due to lack of electricity, it is believed that they can still endure.

But when innocent members of a family bear the brunt of power failure, which is in no way their fault, by losing their lives, it then becomes not only inexplicable, but also unbearable. This was the fate of the Antais, who lost four out of seven members of the family to the power problem.

If members of the extended family of the late Sunday Okon Antai had their way, they would have postponed the doomsday for 30 years. This would have at least given the breadwinner of a family of seven more time to train his children before breathing his last.

Antai, a fisherman by profession, died alongside three members of his family on Sunday after inhaling a large dose of carbon monoxide emitted by his electricity generator.

Antai, who had just erected a bungalow in his village, Ekiebong, Enwang in the Mbo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State had thought of a way of avoiding the intense heat from the dry season's hot weather and decided to buy a power generating set. Such decision became a fatal one as it never occurred to him that power generators emit poisonous gas; carbon monoxide that could snuff life out of man if not kept at bay.

Today, Antai, his wife; Esther, their 14-year-old daughter; Rose and another child of four years; Victoria are all dead because Antai made a mistake of leaving his power generator on in an enclosure without ventilation.

Investigation revealed that Antai had always left the generating set in an enclosure that looked like a store in his new building. The effect of carbon monoxide emitted by



Generator

the generator was not felt initially because Antai had not fixed windows at the various openings of his house.

However, when the breadwinner bought aluminium window blinds and fixed them last Saturday, he decided to lock the windows, even when the generator was on. Having finished the day's job as a fisherman, Antai chose the option of retiring to bed with his family while the generator's sound was at its highest decibel. Unfortunately, the carbon monoxide emanating from the generating set could not find any root of escape. It later

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pervaded the whole rooms in the building.

Narrating the incident to SUNDAY PUNCH on Wednesday, the elder brother to Antai, Mr. Okon Antai said an electrician, who came to fix some wires for his brother, had visited the place on Sunday to discuss the modalities of executing the job. He noted that the electrician was surprised that the doors and windows of the building were still locked as at 8.30am.

"Sensing that it was unusual for the Antais to remain in bed as at that time, the electrician peeped through one of the windows and saw what looked like three lifeless bodies before raising the alarm and when we gained entry into the building, we (including the electrician) noticed that my brother's second wife was gasping for breath," Antai's elder brother lamented.

"We had to rush the seven of them, including a six-month-old baby to a hospital in Enwang. The doctor on duty later referred us to the University of Uyo Teaching Hospital. Before we could get there four members of the family, including my brother had died.

"The doctors said it was as a result of carbon monoxide, which was inhaled by my brother and his family members."

But the second wife, Elizabeth; the six-month-old child; Favour and one other person were lucky to have survived the incident.

On why the late Antai decided to place the generator in an enclosure and lock both the doors and the windows, the deceased elder brother explained that he (Antai) was trying to prevent the item from being stolen by criminals.

According to him, his brother and many others never knew the consequence of keeping generators in an enclosure without ventilation. He said his brother and the three members of his family would have been alive today if he (Antai) had the slightest knowledge that his decision to leave the generator on in an enclosure was fatal.

Wearing a pensive mood, Antai's brother said that it would not be easy to train those left behind by the deceased due to lack of money. He added that selling the house to raise some money to train the children could not be contemplated because the building would help the survivors to continue to remember their father as a hard-working man.

SUNDAY PUNCH observed that apart from the 14-year-old Rose and four-year-old Victoria that were buried outside, Antai and his first wife were interred right inside two rooms in the building.

Asked why the family took such a step, Okon said it was a tradition in Ekiebong to bury adults and owners of the house inside their buildings.

Also, the late Antai's aged mother, Mrs. Akon Antai, who was seriously depressed why speaking through an interpreter, lamented that her hope of being buried by her son had been dashed by the sudden death of Antai and three members of his family.

Amidst pleas that she should take heart and bear the loss, Akon Antai said she might not be able to survive the shock of losing her dear son and grandchildren.

The chairman of Mbo LGA, Mr. Victor Antai, who paid a condolence visit to the members of the deceased, expressed sadness at the development and prayed against the recurrence of such a tragedy.

The local government chairman gave an undisclosed amount of money to the deceased brother to settle all the medical bills incurred why trying to save the lives of Antai and the three members of his family.

However, when our correspondent visited the University of Uyo Teaching Hospital, a top official of the hospital confirmed that the deceased unknowingly inhaled the poisonous carbon monoxide.







The official, who preferred anonymity, pointed out that the family lost four of its members as a result of the generator that was placed in an enclosed environment.

He warned members of the public to desist from keeping generators in an enclosed environment, describing the consequence of inhaling carbon monoxide as always fatal.

Calling on the government to take the issue of power supply to its citizens seriously, the hospital official reasoned that Antai and three members of his family would have been alive today if there was adequate power supply in the country.

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