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Generator fumes kill six in Benin

By Fidelis Soriwei, Benin

A 75-year-old man, Mr. Michael Aiwekhoi, his 50-year-old wife and four other members of his family have died due to suspected fumes emitted from a generating set at his residence, 33, Ihogbe Street, off Wire Road, Benin City in the early hours of Monday.

Among those killed were Eric Aiwekhoi, a son of the deceased, who was billed to complete his National Youth Service Corps in February 2009, an in-law of the owner of the house who graduated from the Auchi Polytechnic, identified simply as Eric and three other people whose names were not released to our correspondent at the time of filing this report.

A neighbour of the Aiwekhois at Ihogbe Street, who identified himself as Monday Agbekhan, said that a seventh person, a son of the late Michael, who was rushed to the Specialist Hospital in Benin was in a state of coma.

According to Aigbekhan, the late Michael Aiwekhoi, the Odionwere (head) of the street, had put the medium-sized generator in the passage of his residence, a mud house with a poor ventilating system, with the exhaust facing the wall close to the rooms and the main sitting room of the house before going to bed.

It was further learnt that the poisonous carbon monoxide from

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the generator might have affected the respiratory systems of the affected people in the apartment as they were discovered dead in the early hours of Monday with foams coming out of their mouths.

According to Agbekhai, one of the sons of Aiwekhoi, who was in a room within the same apartment had discovered that his father and other members of the family were in a perilous condition and raised the alarm which attracted the attention of their neighbours.

The eye-witness said that the neighbours could not do much to salvage the situation as the six people were already dead than took the seventh person to the Specialist Hospital for urgent medical attention, where he was confirmed by doctors to be in a state of coma.

When our correspondent got to the residence of the Aiwekhoi, several sympathisers were seen wailing just as family members and people from the palace of the Oba of Benin had visited the place to condole with the family.

Meanwhile, the Edo State Police Command said that it has commenced investigation into the death of the six people to ascertain the cause of the deaths.

Spokesman of the command, Mr. Peter Ogboi, an Assistant Superintendent of Police, told our correspondent on the telephone on Monday that the police would not just treat the deaths as being caused by generator fumes without an investigation.

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