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Five die, 14 injured in Ijebu Ode auto crash

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ABOUT five passengers died and 14 others injured when three vehicles were involved in an accident on Wednesday at Atoyu on Ijebu-Ode-Ore-Benin Expressway.

Speaking with our correspondent in Abeokuta on Wednesday, the Ogun State Sector Commander, Federal Road Safety Commission, Mr. Olu-Mike Olagunju, said the accident occurred about 2am on the busy road.

It was learnt that the three vehicles involved were a Fiat truck with registration XL 208 AUC; a luxury bus, XA 648 ACH; and a Mercedes Benz 911 bus with no registration number.

Olagunju explained that one of the vehicles had left its lane on the expressway to face the vehicles coming from the Ore end of the highway and had a head-on collision with the oncoming vehicles.

Olagunju added, "That is why we keep on telling motorists to be patient when they are on the road. This accident happened in the middle of the night, when you can hardly get help from anywhere.

"It is dangerous to drive 'one-way' in the afternoon let alone in the night. Visibility is poor and the weather might not be favourable.

"It was possible that the oncoming trucks did not see the recalcitrant driver, who followed one-way for no just cause."

The FRSC Unit Commander, Ijebu Ode, Mr. Yusuf Anto, also confirmed the accident.

He said during the rescue operation that lasted for over one hour, movement on the

highway was brought to a standstill with the joint team of the police and the FRSC officials controlling traffic.

It was learnt that the injured were rushed to the State Hospital, Ijebu Ode, while the bodies of the dead were deposited in the hospital's mortuary.

Meanwhile, less than two months after the enforcement of the use of crash helmets by the FRSC, commercial motorcycle operators, popularly called okada riders, have shunned its use in Abeokuta, the Ogun State capital.

They have also refused to supply the helmets to their passengers.

Our correspondent, who went round the town on Tuesday to observe the level of compliance, discovered that most of the riders, outside the main town hardly used the helmets.

According to one of the riders, the crash helmets had "some side effects" on his head, while the cost of securing a good one was exorbitant.

The operator, who identified himself simply as Kunle, said he had always discovered that he would develop itching on his head each time he wore the helmets in hot weather.

He said, "The cost of getting a good helmet is high. We used to obtain helmets when you bought a motorcycle, but few months before the enforcement, the traders started removing them to sell separately.

"Some of them even hoarded them before January; such that you could not even get any to buy."

It was also observed that most operators, who even had the helmets strapped to their motorcycles, hardly used it unless FRSC officials were on the road.

The FRSC Public Enlightenment Officer, Mr. Oluwasola Johnson, said the commission had impounded 1,535 since January 1.

He, however, added that the commission had not started sanctioning the riders who had not been providing their passengers with the helmets.

"What we do now, is to direct the operator of any impounded motorcycles to produce the helmets before their okadas are released to them. We equally number the helmets so that another person does not produce it as his own."

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