

Five feared dead, vehicles burnt in tanker fire

Adelani Adepegba, Abuja

NO fewer than five persons were feared dead and an unspecified number injured when a petrol tanker caught fire and consumed four cars at Madalla, Niger State on Sunday morning.

The accident, which occurred at Madalla market along Abuja-Suleja Road also claimed many stalls and foodstuffs. Our correspondent gathered that the fuel-laden tanker fell on its side and ignited a fire that spread to

the stalls.

One of the victims was a trader who was sleeping in his stall.

A jeep, two Volkswagen Golf cars, an unidentified car and a motorcycle were destroyed in the blaze, which was eventually extinguished by the fire service.

Our correspondent, who visited the scene at 5.30pm, learnt that the tanker, which was heading from Suleja Abuja, lost its bearing as it tried to ascend a hill.

An eyewitness said that the

conductor of the tanker was trying to place a wedge behind one of its tyres when the vehicle rolled over to its side and caught fire. Five persons were immediately burnt to death.

The owner of the jeep, whose identity could not be ascertained, was said to have parked by the side of the road to buy meat when the accident occurred.

He was said to have asked his three children to alight from the jeep, an act which saved them from being killed.

The eyewitness said that the market had experienced a similar incident thrice. He stated that the last accident, which also involved a tanker, claimed more than 80 lives, as it occurred on a busy market day.

The Coordinator, Special Marshalls of the Federal Road Safety Corps, Unit 11, Suleja, Mr. Tajudeen Lawal, confirmed the development.

He said the accident happened around 9am, adding that he saw only two charred bodies at the scene.

He stated that FRSC officials rushed the injured persons to Suleja General Hospital and Lukas Hospital and Maternity Hospital.

The Chief Medical Director of Lukas Hospital, Dr. Valentine Ugwoegbu, told our correspondent that about 18 persons were rushed to the centre in a critical condition. He said two of the injured persons had been discharged.

He said that his staff were over-stretched by the number of patients rushed to the medical facility, adding that some of them were under observation and may be transferred to the General Hospital if their condition deteriorated.

He noted that the remaining 16 patients were still in a critical condition, with some of them unable to speak due to trauma.

Akpabio yet to set up probe panel for LG chairmen

Kazeem Ibrahim, Uyo

ONE month after Akwa Ibom

