

Worker electrocuted less than a month after employment

Etim Ekpimah, Uyo

A worker with China Civil Engineering and Construction Corporation, identified simply as Effiom, has been electrocuted while working at a site in Uyo, the Akwa Ibom State capital.

PUNCH METRO learnt that Effiom, a native of Calabar, was working on Friday at Ikot Obio Offong area of Aka-Nung Udoo Road, when the forklift he was using to place slabs on a gutter hit a high tension cable.

The forklift was said to have been completely burnt while Effiom also died on the spot.

Sources said other workers were asked not to go near the equipment until Power Holding Company of Nigeria switched off power supply and the equipment was towed after Effiom's corpse had been removed.

A source, who works with the firm but

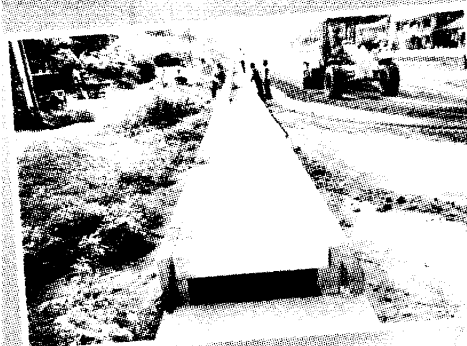
did not wish to be named for fear of being victimised, said Effiom joined the company early this month and only a handful of staff had details about him.

Already, Effiom's colleagues are accusing the firm of covering up the death.

Another employee, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the firm had a way of covering up their workers' deaths, especially those who died on duty.

He stated that he was afraid that the firm might give Effiom's family only N750,000 compensation to them.

He said, "We do not have government



The high tension cable which electrocuted Effiom. Inset: The gutter he was working on.
Photos: Etim Ekpimah

Okada rider unconscious after being brutalised by policemen

Eniola Akinkuotu

In most parts of the world, the presence of policemen in an area evokes a feeling of safety. However, for motorcycle operators in the Adeniji Jones area of Lagos State, the presence of policemen evokes fear.

PUNCH METRO learnt that around 4pm on Tuesday, an unidentified okada rider passed out after policemen who had mounted a checkpoint on Talabi Street allegedly pushed him off his bike.

According to an eyewitness account, the policemen flagged him down but he refused to stop. The policemen then pushed him off the bike, after which he fell and fainted.

An artisan, who identified himself simply as Kasali said, "About seven policemen from Wemabod Police Station stood by the checkpoint on Talabi Street around 4pm. They were carrying out their routine stop and search when an okada rider carrying passenger was flagged down.

"The okada rider refused to stop and this infuriated the policemen who pushed him the bike making him and the passenger to sustain injuries.

"Surprisingly, while the passenger stood up, the okada rider was unconscious."

PUNCH METRO learnt that

after over 20 minutes of attempting to revive the victim proved abortive, the policemen decided to carry him and the passenger into their patrol vehicle.

"I tried to see if the okada man was still breathing but policemen chased us away and threatened to deal with anyone who came close to the vehicle," our source said.

A resident of Talabi Street, who identified himself simply as Johnson, said the policemen at the checkpoint were notorious and high-handed.

He said, "I'm not complaining about the presence of the policemen, it's their high-handedness. I can't stand it.

"Most of the time, they just extort money from commercial motorists and when these motorists refuse to part with money, they resort to harassment."

An okada rider, who spoke to our correspondent on the condition of anonymity, described the incident as a common occurrence in the area.

He said, "The policemen are usually hostile towards us. They extort money from us at every opportunity and I think the authorities should look into it.

"You can imagine, after the victim fell from his bike, they left him on the road for almost 20 minutes before carrying him into their vehicle."

When our correspondent called the spokesperson for the state command, Mr. Samuel Jinadu, for comment, he said he was unaware of the incident.

He said, "I haven't heard of the incident. But let me make one thing clear, no member of the Nigeria Police is trained to be brutal or uncivil towards members of the public.

"Rather, we are trained to be law abiding and people-friendly. Any policeman who acts otherwise will be punished accordingly."

in this country. The Chinese would come here, enslave the people and cause the death of both workers and non-workers without adequate compensation. We are poorly paid and live from hand to mouth. There is very little we can do with the money we are being paid.

"It is time the government of this country respected the rights of every citizen; our right to life, right to healthy living; right to work and right to associate. It is only when the government has done these things that it will keep account of those who are living and those who die and what caused their deaths."

The Public Relations Manager of the firm, Mr. Solomon Matthew, who acknowledged the worker's death, declined further comment on the incident.

He said it was beyond him to make comments on the issue, adding that it was the company's issue.

Efforts to get a comment on the death from the Police Public Relations Officer, Akwa Ibom State Command, Mr. Onyeka Orji, also proved abortive.

Like the firm's PRO, Orji acknowledged the worker's death but turned down our correspondent's request to make further comment on the issue.



Lagos CP, Yakubu Aliqali