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Three die, four missing in Onitsha rainstorm

APRIL 16, 2013 BY EMMANUEL OBE, AWKA

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Equipment being used to recover car swept into a canal, Goods destroyed by the rainstorm and Trader counting his losses

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No fewer than three persons died while four persons were missing as thousands of residents of Onitsha, Anambra State counted their losses after their homes and property were destroyed in a downpour that occurred Sunday night.

Although three bodies were found after the rainstorm, the four missing people were feared to have been swept into River Niger.

Two of the bodies found were that of the occupants of a Toyota Camry car, whose identities could not be determined. They were swept into a large drainage channel and their bodies recovered with the use of a crane.

The missing people were occupants of a tricycle, which was feared to have been swept into River Niger. There was another corpse near the Kate Bus stop.

Residents affected were mainly in the Woliwo, Nwangene, Silas Works, Housing Estate, Bida Road, Creek Road, and adjoining areas.

The rainstorm caused serious flooding that swept away parked cars in the neighbourhoods.

Also affected were public power supply cables and pillars; telecommunications mast, one of which collapsed, and telephone cables.

By Monday morning, residents of the affected areas were seen packing out their soaked property and clearing their homes of the dirty water from Nwangene Canal that is being dredged.

A spokesman for the victims, Mr. Obiora Oguonu, who is also the Chairman, Silas Works Road Residents Forum, said more than 500 houses and 3,000 homes were affected by the storm.

He said while some homes were heavily flooded, some other houses lost their roofs, and some cars parked outside were destroyed.

Oguonu blamed the flooding on the blockage of the Nwangene Canal by the contractor handling its rehabilitation. He said because flood water could not collect into the canal and run off to the nearby River Niger, the water retreated to nearby homes.

He said, "We are appealing to the government not to allow the blessing (Nwangene dredging) to turn to a curse because of the insensitivity of the contractor handling the project."

The Executive Director of the Anambra State Emergency Management Agency, Dr. Nwabufo Ijezie, said no life was lost.

At the popular Onitsha Electronics International Market along the Asaba – Onitsha road, traders said they might have lost goods worth hundreds of millions of naira to the rainstorm.

Affected traders at the electronics market were moody as they tried to recover what was left of their goods,

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while others wept profusely.

The Public Relations Officer of the Market, Mr. Innocent Ezemenari, put the losses at about N2.5b in goods destroyed by the flood. He said most of the victims were young traders who had just been started in their business by their former masters.

He called on President Goodluck Jonathan, Governor Peter Obi and all people of goodwill to come to their rescue in this time of distress.

Traders at Enamelware Market were also affected as their goods were destroyed. A source said an entire warehouse in the market was swept off by the flood that started at about 6.30pm on Sunday and lasted up till 10.00pm.

The entire Bridgehead to Upper Iwaka section of the Onitsha – Enugu Expressway was a spectre of debris, mud and sand left behind by the rainstorm.

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