

# 13 killed in Lagos-Ibadan Expressway fire

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Scenes of the incident Photos: Sodiq Adelakun

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No fewer than 13 persons have been killed after fire gutted five vehicles at the Lotto, Mowe end of the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway on Tuesday.

While some of the deceased were reported to have been scooping fuel from a fallen tanker, others were said to be passengers in a commercial bus and two Hilux vans.

**PUNCH Metro** learnt that four other persons were injured in the inferno, including an official of the Ogun State Fire Service, identified as Ayodele Adetayo.

The injured victims were said to have been rushed to private hospitals before being transferred to the Olabisi Onabanjo University Teaching Hospital.

It was gathered that at about 3pm on Monday, a fuel tanker belonging to Total Nigeria Plc, had fallen while trying to avoid crashing into a herd of cows that had strayed onto the expressway.

Four of the cows were reportedly killed just as some fuel spilled onto the road and into gutter.

Our correspondents were told that the herdsmen immediately fled the scene after residents attempted to mob them.

Policemen from the Redemption Camp division were said to have removed the dead cows, and contacted Total to send another truck for fuel transfer.

*PUNCH Metro* learnt that a new truck arrived at the area around 11pm on Monday and was able to load the fuel from the fallen tanker with the help of the Ogun State Fire Service officials.

It was learnt that after the evacuation, the fallen tanker was towed away, while the new tanker also left the area.

It was gathered that some residents came out and started scooping the fuel spilled into the gutter.

Our correspondents gathered that at about 1am, a Sports Utility Vehicle, which had a burst tyre, drove on its rim, which ignited the fire that also engulfed it.

The fire was said to have engulfed an 18-seater bus driving behind it, two Hilux vans, a Dangote truck and a fire service truck, which was rounding off operation.

*PUNCH Metro* learnt that some occupants of the vehicles were trapped and the fire burnt them beyond recognition.

An eyewitness, who gave her name only as Sunmibare, said the fire service men were rolling their hose back into the truck, when the fire started.

She added that the fire service official that was injured, Adetayo, was rushed to Temitope Clinic – a private health facility in the area.

She said, “One of the fire service men was injured. The fire razed their truck and a Dangote truck beside it. There was no hope of putting out the fire since the fire service men had become helpless. The fire raged till about 7am.”

The Police Public Relations Officer, Muyiwa Adejobi, said 13 charred remains were recovered from the scene.

Adejobi, a Deputy Superintendent of Police said, “The road was soaked with fuel after the tanker fell. The police and the fire service men were trying to neutralise the power of the petrol when fire broke out. The fire service truck, which was on duty, was the first to be burnt.

“No fewer than 13 people were burnt beyond recognition. About five vehicles were also burnt. We urge those whose relatives are missing to come forward for possible identification because for now we cannot recognise anybody.”

But the Commander, Federal Road Safety Corps, Mowe, Oludare Ogunjobi, said there was no casualty.

He said, “We had already secured the area and removed the tanker from the scene. But some people came and started scooping fuel. Suddenly, there was an explosion and in the process, the fire service multi-purpose tanker and other four vehicles were burnt. No life was lost and nobody sustained any injury. We were able to clear the road after some hours of gridlock.”

Also, the Head of Operations, Ogun State Traffic Compliance and Enforcement Corps, Ibafo, K.A. Ojerinde, said four persons sustained injuries, adding that some people were feared dead.

He said, “About five cars were burnt and some people feared dead. We have moved the affected vehicles from the expressway. Three of the fire service men sustained injuries. They have been transferred to OOUTH for treatment.”

When *PUNCH Metro* visited Temitope Clinic where one of the survivors was taken to, a matron, who gave her name as Titilayo Salisu, said the victim had been referred to a government hospital.

“The fire service official was brought in around 1am. He was injured in the arms, hands and face. Some part of his limbs were also damaged. After stabilising him, he was referred to a government hospital,” she said.

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