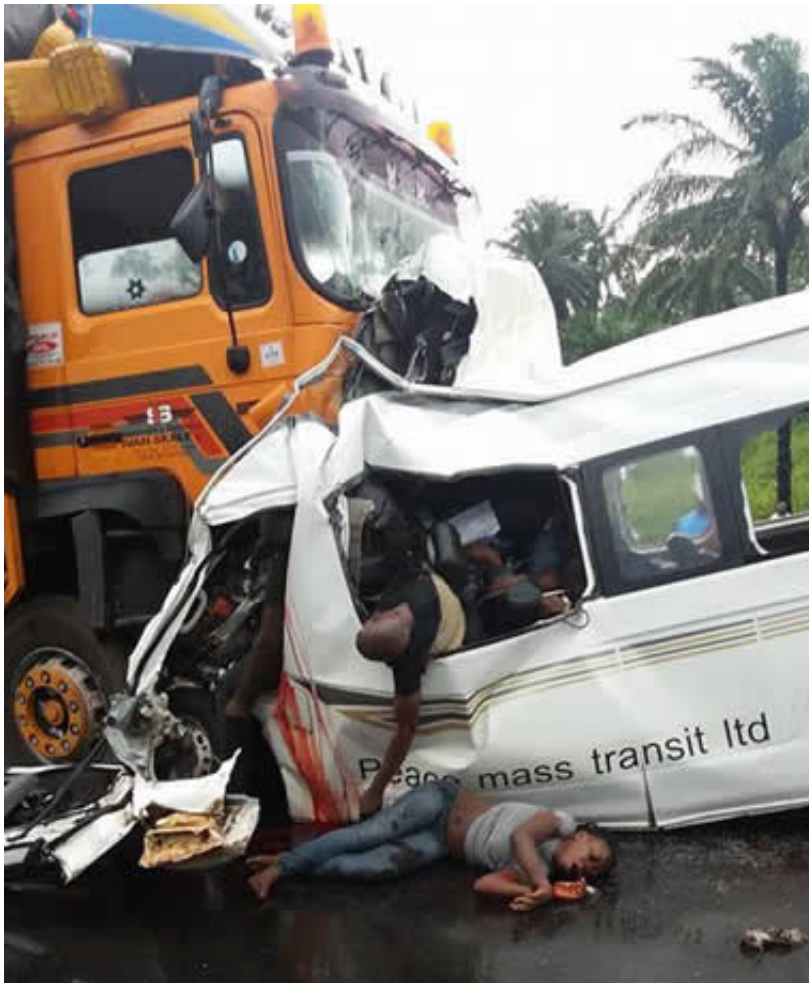


# 13 die, others injured in Abia auto crash

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## Afeez Hanafi

No fewer than 13 persons died on Sunday after a commercial bus en route from Enugu State had a head-on collision with a trailer at Ofeme Junction on Umuahia Road, Abia State.

Two other passengers in the 18-seater bus belonging to Peace Mass Transit Limited with number plate, AKL895YY, reportedly sustained varying degrees of injuries in the accident that happened around 11am.

The trailer en route to Enugu State from Port Harcourt, River State, was said to be on top speed and lost control, veering into the path of the bus, which was a few kilometres away from its destination – Umuahia.

It was gathered that the trailer driver fled the scene immediately after the crash.

An eyewitness, who identified herself simply as Sharon, said some of the passengers were mangled in the bus while others were thrown on the road as crowd gathered to rescue the injured. She said she was in another bus travelling to Ebonyi State, adding that he counted eight lifeless bodies at the spot.

She said, "It (the accident) happened just now along Umuahia Road. Please rescue team should try and locate them. Eight lives claimed already."

It was learnt that officials of the Federal Road Safety Corps later arrived at the scene to remove the remains of the deceased.

Another witness, who did not want his name in print, said 13 persons died in the crash, blaming it on the recklessness of the trailer driver.

"The bus driver was driving at a good speed because he was almost at Umuahia which is the final destination. It was the driver of the trailer that lost control of the vehicle because he was speeding and suddenly, it derailed into the path of the bus. Thirteen passengers, including the bus driver died instantly. Only three persons were rescued alive and two of them are in critical conditions," he said.

The Sector Commander, FRSC Abia State Command, Mrs. Stella Uche, confirmed that 13 persons died. She said the two injured victims had been rushed to the Federal Medical Centre, Umuahia, for treatment and urged motorists to install speed limiters into their vehicles to avert accidents and loss of lives.

She said, "The command received a distress call at 11.20am and its operatives moved to the scene of the accident at Ofeme Junction immediately. The accident was caused by excess speeding on the part of the Man Disel (trailer) driver. It lost control and veered into the route of the bus. Out of the 16 persons in the bus, two injured while 13 persons – nine males, three females and a child – died. The injured were taken to the FMC, Umuahia and the corpses had been deposited in the mortuary.

"We have been orientating motorists on the dangers of excess speeding. There is need for motorists to calm down while driving. We have also identified loss of control as one of the causes of

crashes. In the times of emergencies, one should not drive beyond 100 km per hour so that the vehicle can easily be controlled in case of any sudden complication. I want to urge motorists to buy into speed limiter initiative of the FRSC to forestall crashes.”

When our correspondent contacted one of the numbers on the bus, a man, who identified himself as a member of Peace Mass Transit’s management, but declined to disclose his name, said he was aware of the incident. He, however, refused to give further comment.

He said, “Yes, one of our buses was involved in an accident along Umuahia Road. Our people in Umuahia are aware and they are already at the scene.”

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