

80 killed on Lagos-Ibadan Expressway in six months

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at least 80 persons have been killed in different auto accidents on the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway between January and June 2016.

The statistics were obtained from only the cases reported by our correspondents and confirmed by the Federal Road Safety Corps, the Ogun State Traffic Compliance and Enforcement Agency (TRACE), the Ogun State Police Command and other agencies.

According to *The PUNCH* reports within the period, 98 persons sustained varying degrees of injury from the accidents on the expressway.

The Federal Road Safety Corps, Zone 2, which monitored accidents in the Lagos and Ogun regions of the expressway, did not release its statistics for the period after one of our correspondents requested them.

However, records obtained from the Ogun State TRACE say 91 crashes occurred on the Ogun State end of the expressway in six months.

Of the number, 44 people were said to have died, while 149 persons were injured.

On Thursday, January 7, a truck had reportedly crashed into a van conveying pepper traders at the

Warewa end of the expressway, during which three traders died.

It was reported that the driver of the truck fled the scene of the accident while pepper splashed on the expressway with traders struggling to come out of the wreckage.

On Wednesday, January 13, five passengers were crushed to death while 13 others were critically injured at the Mowe end of the expressway in an accident involving a truck and a Mazda commercial bus.

It was learnt that the accident, which occurred around 1pm in Ayetoro village, was caused by the Mazda's head-on collision with the stationary truck. A nursing mother and her two children were among the dead.

On Friday, February 5, three passengers escaped death at the Arepo end of the expressway after a truck rammed into a Toyota Sienna car. The crash, which occurred at an intersection on the highway, had left the car mangled.

On Sunday, February 7, around 7am, 30 male passengers died at the Adeosun end of the road after a truck conveying them crashed. In the accident, over 50 people sustained varying degrees of injuries, while two rams were also killed. The accident occurred at the Oyo State end of the expressway.

On Thursday, March 17, 10 persons were crushed to death at the Ajebo end of the expressway in Ogun State, after a Mazda bus, with number plate APP 912 XH, collided with a truck opposite the Foursquare camp in the area.

The accident, which occurred at about 2pm, was said to have been caused by the bus driver, who drove against the traffic, leading to a collision with the truck.

On Tuesday, May 3, 13 persons were burnt to death at the Lotto-Mowe end of the expressway. The accident, which involved a commercial bus and two Toyota Hilux vans, happened around 1am after a Sport Utility Vehicle suffered a tyre blow-out.

The rim of the SUV grinding the road produced fire sparks which turned into a conflagration when the vehicle sped on fuel spilled by a fallen tanker.

The Ogun State Police Public Relations Officer, DSP Muyiwa Adejobi, who confirmed the deaths, had said the charred remains of the deceased were removed from the scene.

On Sunday, June 19, at the Fidiwo/Ajebo end, a fully-loaded commercial bus and a fuel tanker had a head-on collision in which 19 people lost their lives.

The Zonal Commanding Officer, FRSC, Zone 2, Nseobong Akpabio, attributed the accidents to reckless driving, adding that some failed portions on the expressway also contributed to the accidents.

He said, "Indiscipline is the major cause of most of the accidents. For instance, between the Ogunmakin and Ogere end of the expressway, drivers speed because construction work had just been concluded and the road is smooth. The same is applicable between the Mowe and Sagamu end of the road.

"There are also failed portions in some parts. If any vehicle runs into some of the bad portions at full speed, it would veer off the road and the vehicle would end up in the bush. We wrote a report on the various failed portions on the expressway and that informed the ongoing construction works which will cover several kilometres.

"However, we noticed that where there is a diversion on the road due to the ongoing construction works, drivers tend to be involved in dangerous overtaking. They turn the road to a race track. Many times, we noticed that the head-on collisions were caused by poor judgments on the part of the drivers."

He said the corps had decided to tighten enforcement on the expressway, adding that the agency had acquired a piece of equipment that could detect a drunk driver.

He urged motorists to comply with traffic rules in order not to endanger their lives and those of other road users.

"We have received 22 new patrol vehicles, some motorcycles and ambulances. We are increasing enforcement on the Ogunmakin, Ogere, Mowe, Sagamu axes with mobile courts," he added.

The Public Relations Officer, TRACE, Babatunde Akinbiyi, said efforts taken by the agency to

reduce road accidents included public enlightenment and training of arrested drivers.

He said, "From the data we have, 10 people died in each month of January, April and June, while there were three deaths in February, six in March and five in May, making a total of 44 deaths.

"While 35 of the crashes were caused by speeding, 20 were due to dangerous driving and 13 caused by bad tyres. Nine cases were caused by those driving against the traffic and 14 were caused by other reasons.

"We usually engage in public enlightenment on how road users should conduct themselves. Also, there are illegal routes being plied by some motorists. We usually discourage that so that accidents could be minimal. We have a training school for offending drivers, where they are taught to be responsible. The school runs every day."

Commercial drivers plying the route, however, called on the Federal Government to fix the bad portions on the road.

Some of them, who spoke with *PUNCH Metro*, lamented the effects of the bad spots on the road on their vehicles, saying they took them for repairs everytime.

A driver at the Ojodu-Berger Motor Park, Tunde Opatotun, urged the government to provide funds needed by contractors rehabilitating the expressway.

Opatotun, who spoke in Yoruba, said, "The government needs to show commitment to the rehabilitation and ensure that the contractors finish the work on time. People usually blame accidents on the recklessness of drivers, but most of us have become responsible.

"We go for counselling at our branch and state offices regularly. At this motor park, drivers are tested for drunkenness before embarking on any journey.

"If the road is good and every one drives carefully, accidents would be reduced. It is dangerous for drivers to be facing each other on a narrowed road caused by the diversion of traffic. Some portions of the road are impassable. I take my bus to the mechanic every five days for repairs. If I don't, it will develop more faults. "

Another driver, Sheriff Ahmed, said the potholes on the single lane to which motorists were diverted because of the ongoing construction, contributed to the high rate of accidents on the road.

He said collisions occurred in an attempt by drivers to evade the potholes.

“The contractors should speed up work on the road and fix the bad portions on the single lane we are restricted to. From Fidiwo to Foursquare, it is one lane; from Ajebo to Kwari towards Ibadan, Oyo State – is also a single lane. Floods have destroyed many spots there and they need to be fixed urgently,” he added.

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