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25 passengers die in Imo auto crashes

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Chidiebube Okeoma, Owerri

No fewer than 25 people were feared dead on the Owerri-Onitsha Expressway in Imo State after two heavy-duty trucks collided with two hummer buses in separate accidents.

The tragedies happened on Monday at Catering School Junction and Okpokija Junction respectively in Irete community, in the Owerri West Local Government Area of the state between 4pm and 4.20pm.

An eyewitness, who gave his name simply as *MC T-Boy*, told our correspondent at the scene of one of the crashes that a commercial Hummer bus, filled with passengers from Onitsha to Owerri, was crushed by a heavy-duty truck conveying empty containers when it (bus) tried to overtake it on the expressway.

He said all the 18 passengers on board, the driver and the conductor died on the spot.

He said, “As if that was not enough, another one occurred within a space of 20 minutes. About five persons died on the spot in the second accident, while several others were injured.

“The second crash, which occurred at the Okpokija Filling Station Junction on the same expressway, was one poll drive from the scene of the first accident.

“Another big truck, which was coming from Onitsha to the state capital, ran into another Hummer bus said to be conveying passengers from Lagos to Owerri, which belonged to the Peace Mass Transit.”

He said the second auto accident was as a result of the carelessness of the bus driver who chose to drive against the traffic instead of sticking to his lane



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He said < [Progress bar] > sts were held in the gridlock as people rushed to rescue the accident victims.

“The bus driver was impatient and he decided to drive against the traffic. As he pulled into the opposite lane, his bus was immediately crushed by an incoming truck, leading to the death of five persons.”

He said residents of the area rushed the survivors to nearby hospitals for treatments.

Our correspondent learnt that the buses and the heavy duty trucks had been towed from the expressway, paving the way for free flow of traffic.

An official of the Federal Road Safety Corps in the state, who pleaded not to be named, said the traffic division of the state police command handled the rescue of the accident victims, adding that he could not give a detailed explanation on what happened.

The Police Public Relations Officer in the state, Andrew Enwerem, said the police were alerted immediately the accidents occurred.

He added that policemen rushed the survivors to hospitals, while the dead victims and the vehicles had been evacuated.

Enwerem said investigations into the causes of the auto crashes had commenced.