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Opinion

BUSINESS**Electrocution**

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Guidelines**Published** June 18, 2017

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By Babatunde Fashola

Okechukwu Nnodim


To curtail incidences of electrocution across the country, the Federal Government has put together new safety guidelines for the power sector, known as the Electrical Safe Distance Standard in Nigeria.

The guidelines are contained in a draft report presented to the Minister of Power, Works and Housing, Babatunde Fashola, by the working committee that was inaugurated earlier this year by the Federal Government for this purpose.



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A copy of the draft report, which was obtained by our correspondent in Abuja on Friday, indicated that the decision to come up with the new guidelines became necessary following the incessant cases of electrocution recorded in the sector.

It stated that the resolution to introduce the new guidelines was reached after the tragic incident at a football viewing centre in Calabar, Cross Rivers State, in April this year, which resulted in the deaths of 30 persons.

“What led to this study is the recent incident in Calabar, where people were injured as a result of a line that snapped and dropped on a building under the power distribution company’s Right of Way. However, various incidents have occurred in the sector making the sanction of this study a welcome idea,” the report stated.

Aside the Calabar tragedy, other cases captured by the report included a wire that snapped from a transformer in Lugbe area of Abuja in July 2016; electrocution of a student by an overhead 11KVA at the University of Lagos in September 2015; electrocution of six people by a 33kv high tension wire at Nnanka, Anambra State in 2015; and the deaths of seven people at the Apata-Gata area after a high tension live cable fell on them in 2012.

The committee stated in the draft ESDSN report that there was a need to review regulations of the Nigeria Electricity Regulatory Commission with respect to electricity safe distance.

It said, “We reviewed the regulations in Nigeria and the provisions of NERC. It can be said that a lot of safety consideration has been taken care of in the distribution code, the grid code and the Niger lard regulation.



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The committee observed that it was good practice to review safety guidelines regularly in order to ensure that it was still fit for purpose, accepted by the public and being used by all intended users.

“Where changes in the other areas of modern life dictate, the policy may be tweaked to ensure that it continues being acceptable and fits the needs of the community it is intended to serve,” the committee noted.

It stated that the desire to ensure adequacy of existing standard, greater understanding by state, local government and community planning and building authorities, application by designers, builders and house owners, as well as enforcement by appropriate federal, state and local government authorities in order to promote and protect public safety was one of the reasons for the new guidelines.

“Also, it is due to the huge growth in population and growing use of electricity in our society, and the resultant need for more transmission and distribution lines even in ill-planned, unplanned and densely populated areas and well planned areas of our communities, and even open areas that are being transverse by these electricity lines,” it added.

On some of the guidelines, the committee recommended a joint approach to solving problems of electrocution.

It said policy decisions and standards should come from the government and regulatory agencies, while the organisations must be held accountable for accurate implementation.

It added that state houses of assembly should enact laws that prohibit people from building under high voltage lines or on the Right of Way, as well as ensure that there was no compensation for any accident due.

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building under power li... ed in the report.



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It said there should be an adequate regulatory support of the electricity distribution companies and the Transmission Company of Nigeria to reinforce weak lines, as well as adequate capital expenditure to be provided in the Multi Year Tariff Order.

One of the guidelines mandated all power distribution companies and the TCN to fence all substations, adding that they must use Faraday cages and cradle where there was a building under the RoW.

It further stated that NERC should develop standard RoW guidelines and compatible uses.

The committee also recommend that the minister should set up a policy working group on public safety that that should be made up of various stakeholders, state planning authorities and public health workers to review safety guidelines in the sector from time to time.

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