

# Family blames power firm as fallen wire electrocutes Lagos businesswoman

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Mutiat Okanlawon

## Deji Lambo

The family of the late Mutiat Okanlawon, who had been thrown into mourning after she got electrocuted by a high tension wire that fell off the pole in the Solebo area of Aga in the Ikorodu Local Government Area of Lagos State, has demanded justice for the victim.

*PUNCH Metro* gathered from the family that Okanlawon, who was escorting a friend, Funmi, who visited her on Sunday, December 9, 2018, when the tragedy struck, spent over three weeks at the Gbagada General Hospital before she gave up the ghost on Tuesday, January 1, 2019.

An eyewitness, who identified himself simply as David, said the wire that fell on Okanlawon was responsible for her death, adding that he informed officials of the Ikeja Electric to switch off the power immediately the incident occurred.

The Oyo State indigene said, “I informed Ikeja Electric officials that a high tension wire had fallen off the pole so that they could switch off the power. She (Okanlawon) was escorting someone, who had visited her, when the wire sparked and fell off the pole.

“Immediately it fell, it landed on her and she fell on the floor. The part of her body that was affected at first was the calf and the damage appeared more like using a machete to cut her. The injury was so deep that her bone could be seen.

“The worst part of it was that the wire rolled up to her stomach and burnt her intestine, laps and hands; in fact, all her body except her neck and face was severely burnt. People were scared of moving near her, but I and one other guy had to use a stick to remove the wire from her body. All of a sudden, her lover, who was alerted to the incident, rushed out and started shouted for help; he was in shock and didn’t know what to do and we had to collect his car key, carried her into the car and rushed her to the Ikorodu General Hospital.”

Okanlawon's niece, Opeyemi Shofu, said the deceased, who had a son, Farhan, was reportedly instructed to eat one crate of boiled egg on a daily basis due to the severity of the burns she suffered as a result of the electrocution.

Shofu stated, "She (Okanlawon) was later transferred to the Gbagada General Hospital, because the Ikorodu General Hospital does not specialise in treating severe burns. At some point in the hospital, she couldn't breathe and she was placed on oxygen. The doctor recommended that she ate a crate of boiled eggs per day and vegetables, because she needed a lot of protein in her system.

"She had celebrated her 40th birthday sometime in August 2018, and now she's gone. If Ikeja Electric had carried out regular maintenance checks on their facilities, this tragedy would have been averted. Her death is due to the negligence of the firm, and that is why we are demanding justice."

Okanlawon's mother, Sekinat Kanzudeen, said her death was a terrible loss, adding that despite spending over N2m to keep her alive, she still died.

The Lagos State indigene explained, "I was at home when I received a call that a wire fell on my daughter. Over 20 tests were conducted on her; they even performed a surgery on her, which cost N400,000, and one of the drugs that she used for three days cost N50,000. We spent over N2m to keep her alive but she still died.

"During the three weeks she spent struggling for life, my children, sister, Silifat Olaribigbe, and I witnessed how she went through a lot of pains in the hospital. It was a very sad experience.

"I was right beside her when she died; I saw how she was crying and biting her fingers, knowing she was going to leave this world. She never expected her journey to end like that; and all she kept telling me was that I should take care of her son, Farhan.

"I have suffered a terrible loss, but I don't want to suffer in vain, which is why I want the government to assist me to get justice."

Okanlawon's aunt, Olaribigbe, who said the victim at some point, told one of the nurses attending to her to inject her to death due to the agony she was going through, added that representatives of Ikeja Electric, who visited the deceased before her demise, gave the family only N10,000.

The 46-year-old trader said, "She died because of the pain she experienced. On the hospital bed, she was screaming and crying, and I was always also crying. If I tried to console her, she would say I didn't understand what she was going through. At a point, she told the nurse to inject her to death when the pain became unbearable.

"Representatives of Ikeja Electric came to visit her in the hospital before she died and they gave us N10,000. We rejected it at first, but they pleaded with us to collect it. They knew she got electrocuted due to their own carelessness. We have decided to conduct an autopsy on her corpse, because we want to sue them to court to get justice."

The Public Relations Officer, Ikeja Electric, Felix Ofulue, who confirmed the incident to our correspondent, commiserated with the bereaved family, adding that investigations had commenced into the events that led to Okanlawon's death.

Ofulue said, "The news of the recent death of the customer following an electrocution incident a few weeks ago was received with deep sadness, especially as we had hoped that medical efforts to aid her recovery would yield positive results.

"We pray that God will give the family the fortitude to bear the loss of their dearly departed.

"As an organisation that operates within a high-risk sector, Ikeja Electric is aware that safety is key to its operations, leading to the constant introduction of measures to eliminate hazards and fatalities within our network. Our efforts are driven by the value we place on the lives of our customers and staff. We are therefore deeply saddened when accidents occur within the network.

"Investigations to ascertain the cause of this incident are ongoing. In the meantime, Ikeja Electric is using this opportunity to assure our customers that efforts will be made to ensure that there is no repeat of this type of incident. Our sincere condolences go to the family of the deceased."