

METRO PLUS

Two dead, many injured in Lagos-Ibadan Expressway tanker explosions

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The accident scene

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Two persons were confirmed dead, while several others were injured after two petrol-laden tankers went up in flames at the Kara Bridge end of the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway on Sunday.

The accident also involved a truck conveying Compressed Natural Gas and a Dangote Cement truck.

PUNCH Metro learnt that the vehicles were travelling out of Lagos when the driver of one of the petrol-laden tankers lost control while trying to overtake the other tanker.

It was gathered that one of the tankers crashed into the cement and the CNG trucks.

Our correspondent learnt that the drivers of the petrol tankers died in the explosions that followed around 1am.

The multiple explosions left commuters and motorists stranded for several hours on the road as nobody could move near the raging inferno.

An eyewitness, who identified himself simply as Taofeek, said he was sleeping under the bridge when he heard a loud noise from the explosions.

He said, “Around 1am, we heard a loud noise and when we came out, we saw tankers burning; one of the drivers could not come out of the vehicle, so he was burnt.

“We learnt that one of the tanker drivers was trying to overtake another tanker in the gridlock, but the other driver didn’t allow him to go and as he was trying to negotiate back to the former position, the driver lost control and rammed into the Dangote Cement truck in front of it, which also rammed into the gas truck.

“This accident was caused by the police, who were enforcing compliance with the lockdown order in Ogun State. They were collecting bribes from motorists, thereby causing the gridlock on the road. It was another driver moving against the traffic, informed the policemen that some trucks were burning; so, they had to remove the barricades on the road so that there could be free flow of traffic.”

Another eyewitness, Tosin Olalere, stated, “The petrol tankers were on top speed from Lagos and when they were about to get to where the traffic had built up, one of the drivers tried to overtake the other, who didn’t allow him to do so; so the first tanker rammed into the Dangote Cement truck and immediately fire started from the tanker and the two tanker drivers could not escape, but the driver of the Dangote truck jumped down from the bridge.”

The driver of the CNG truck, Yusuf Tihamiyu, told *PUNCH Metro* that he was inside his vehicle and waiting for the curfew to be over when he heard a loud noise from behind.

He said, “I was about to go and sleep inside the tractor that I used to sleep in when the driver of one of the tankers lost control and hit the Dangote truck behind my truck and that one in turn rammed into my truck. Both petrol tankers and my vehicle were fully loaded.

“I had to endanger my life by entering into the truck just to drive it away from the exploding tankers so that the impact would not be too much, but I couldn’t move far, because at a point, the gear of the truck stopped working, so I had to jump out and save my life.

“A lot of money has been lost to the explosions and if not for the lockdown, this accident would not have happened.”

PUNCH Metro learnt that the emergency responders at the scene were the National Emergency Management Agency, Lagos State Emergency Management Agency, Federal Fire Service, Lagos State Fire Service, Ogun State Fire Service, Federal Road Safety Corps, the police and the Lagos State Neighbourhood Safety Corps.

Speaking at the scene of the incident, the Director-General, LASEMA, Olufemi Oke-Osanyintolu, said the crash was caused by recklessness on the part of the tanker drivers.

He stated, “The incident occurred around 1.10am and by 10am, we were on top of it and we had curtailed the spread of the fire, which involved four articulated vehicles. Two were laden with 33,000 litres of PMS each, one was filled up with gas and there was another truck.

“Looking at the preliminary analysis, you will see that it was the recklessness of the drivers that caused the accident, but with the combined team, we ensured that there was no spread of the fire to the other side of the road, but some people were injured, treated and discharged.

“We have two injured people undergoing treatment in hospital and we were able to rescue the motor boy of one of the articulated vehicles. However, we recovered one body intact, while the other body was burnt beyond recognition.”

Also speaking at the scene, the Lagos State Sector Commander of the FRSC, Olusegun Ogungbemi, said two injured persons had been taken to the Gbagada General Hospital for treatment.

He said, “The accident involved three tankers and a truck. Two of the tankers were conveying petrol, another conveyed gas, and there was a Dangote Cement truck. From the information we received, there was a lockdown and the vehicles were waiting, but unfortunately, a fuel-laden tanker lost control and rammed into the others and the next thing was the inferno.

“So far, we have been able to move two injured victims to the Gbagada General Hospital. One person was burnt beyond recognition and another corpse was evacuated.”

The acting Head, Lagos State Fire Service, Margaret Adeseye, told journalists that the Ilupeju and Alausa fire stations were mobilised to attend to the inferno.

She said, “The Lagos State Fire Service has successfully extinguished a fire involving three tankers and one truck on the Kara Bridge. The Lagos firemen responded to a fire call involving some vehicles, which was immediately contained from spreading beyond the road before extinguishing it around 9.39am.

“There is still gas leakage from the CNG tanker, which necessitated the Lagos firemen to remain on standby to monitor the leakage until it totally dissipates and danger is completely averted.

“The fire incident was a delicate operation that warranted in the use of a chemical foam compound to avoid further explosions.”