

Building collapse: 84 Lagosians killed in two years

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NO fewer than 84 persons have lost their lives in 18 building collapses in Lagos State in the last two years, Saturday PUNCH has learnt.

The latest of such incident happened at Oba Idowu Oniru Street on Victoria Island on Sunday, September 4 when a seven-storey building under construction caved in, killing two persons in the process.

Our correspondent gathered that three cases were recorded in 2020, six in 2021, while nine cases occurred in 2022.

On September 10, 2020, a storey building partially collapsed at No 26, Afolabi Alasia Street, Gaskiya Road, Ijora-Badia, Lagos State, as a result of lack of maintenance.

Although no life was lost, it was reported that at the time of the visit by Lagos State Emergency Management Agency and other relevant authorities, the backside of the building was showing visible cracks and signs of dilapidation.

Barely nine days later, another building, a three-storey edifice of a private school, Excel College, in Ejigbo, collapsed. Fortunately, schools were not in session as the incident occurred two days before the reopening of secondary and private schools in the state.

However, the case was not the same on Sunday, October 11, 2020, as four persons lost their lives, while eight others sustained various degrees of injuries when a three-storey building that was still under construction caved in on Lagos Island.

The tragedy continued on May 4, 2021, when a bungalow in the Mounted Troop Police Barracks in Ikeja partially collapsed, killing one Peace Bulus, broke the arm of her sister, while their mother, Hauwa and her two other daughters escaped by a whisker.

It was reported that they were sleeping in their one room apartment in the barracks when the incident occurred.

Also, on July 8, 2021, a three-storey building collapsed at No. 19, Church Street, off Adeniji Adele Street, Lagos Island, claiming the life of a five-year-old while other occupants escaped.

According to the report, the building suddenly caved in when some of the occupants, including the deceased child, were already asleep.

On the 20th of the same month, the landlord of a two-storey building under construction at 77, Tapa Road, Oke-Ojo, Isawo in Ikorodu, Lagos State, Pastor

Daniel Obasi, died in the rubbles of his house when the structure came down.

The highest tragedy within the period occurred on November 1, 2021 when a 21-storey building collapsed on Gerrard Road, Ikoyi, killing 46 persons, including the developer of the building, Femi Osibona.

According to the report, the owner of the building under construction in Ikoyi, was given approval to construct only 15 floors, but raised the structure to 21 floors.

However, barely 24 hours after the collapse of the 21-storey building, a two-storey edifice under construction at Osapa London area of Lekki partially caved in following a heavy rainfall.

Although committees were set up to probe the Ikoyi incident separately by the Lagos State Government, Nigerian Building and Road Research Institute and the Council of the Regulation of Engineering in Nigeria, nothing much had changed to stop the trend of building collapse in the state.

Seventeen days after the Ikoyi catastrophe, precisely on November 17, 2021, another two-storey building under construction around Magbon in the Badagry area of the state collapsed, killing four construction workers.

Emergency responders, including members of the community, however, rescued five other survivors, who sustained varying degrees of injury and were rushed to hospital.

Similarly, a three-storey building under construction at Akanbi Crescent, in the Yaba area of Lagos, collapsed on February 12, 2022, killing five people in the process.

Disaster struck again on May 1, 2022, Workers Day, on Ibadan Street, Ebute-Metta area, when 10 tenants lost their lives after a three-storey building collapse.

About 24 persons were also rescued from the rubble of the collapsed building with various degrees of injuries while properties worth millions of naira were destroyed.

On May 7, another two-storey building collapsed on Chris Igadi Street, opposite Kilimanjaro, off Ago Palace Way.

According to the report, nobody was trapped as all the tenants evacuated the area when they observed crumbling signs two hours before the incident.

In the same month, exactly 21st, a three storey building under construction at Alayaki Lane, Lagos Island, collapsed during a

downpour, killing four persons while five others sustained various injuries. It was learnt that the building was initially a bungalow inherited by family members and awarded to a developer who was converting it into a three-storey structure.

On Sunday, April 24, the Deeper Life Bible Church auditorium located in Iragbo community in Badagry, collapsed during the church service after a heavy rainfall, leaving six people with serious injuries.

Another church, Redeemed Christian Church of God in a three-storey building under construction at Mushin area of Lagos, also caved in at about 6.30 pm on Friday, July 1, 2022.

On Wednesday, July 13, 2022, a middle-aged man, Emeka Mba, escaped death when a two-floor building to another church, to Christ Divine Apostolic Church, at Oke Arin Street, Ilupeju, Palmgroove area of Lagos, collapsed in the early hours of the day. It was gathered that the building had been distressed for almost a year, giving signs of collapse, but the landlord who inherited the property from his late father and founder of the church was only unconcerned with the dilapidated building rather busy with collecting rents.

Recently, on August 21, 2022, a tank scaffolding of a two-storey building under renovation at Lady-Lark, Bariga, Lagos State, came down on a bungalow and claimed the lives of two boys; 13-year-old Ayomide Adedeji, and 27-year-old Oluwatosin David, while their mother, Olaoye Funmisho's, and 30-year-old Kudirat Azeez, survived the incident.

Funmisho, who sustained severe injuries, is currently battling for survival at the National Orthopaedic Hospital, Igbobi, Lagos.

All these happened before the that of a seven-storey building under construction on Oba Idowu Oniru Street, Lagos State, came down at 3am on Sunday, September 4, 2022 and claimed the lives of six persons.

The former State Commissioner for Physical Planning and Urban Development, Idris Salako, earlier before his resignation over the incident, disclosed that the building developer had been "hostile" to the agency's officials sent to the site.

He added that the site had been sealed three times but the developer kept breaking the seal to continue the construction.

The multiple building collapses in Nigeria's commercial hub

within the last few years, experts say, is unconnected to the lack of effective monitoring by the government.

The Chairman, Nigeria Institute Architects, Lagos State chapter, David Majekodunmi, expressed concern over the increasing spate in building collapse in the state.

According to him, there is a need for the state government to increase monitoring and enforcement of existing laws and new laws as well as improving efforts on the domestication of the National Building Code.

He said, "If there is really good monitoring and enforcement in place, then we will not have such situation as we have now. Also, what is the insurance of those that are going out for monitoring and enforcement in other for them to do their job well?"

"What makes a building to collapse? It is either incompetence of consultants or whether the consultants are trying to cut corners. When a site is sealed, the moment it's opened, get the person arrested and let them pay for demolition."

Also, the Public Relations Officer, Nigerian Institute of Building, Godfrey Godfrey, said the approvals for building from government agencies should be scrutinised in order to ensure that adequate procedures were followed before constructions were approved in the state.

According to him, structures from five storey buildings and above should undergo peer review whereby private consultants will be engaged to carry out relevant checks and proffer advice on such structures before approval.

"The approvals that have been issued particularly for multiple storey buildings need some kind of vetting for an experienced hand to look at the structural designs.

Also, a building expert and Council Representative, Nigeria Institute of Surveyors, Godwill Pepple, expressed need to improve on soil testing.

He added that soil failure, poor workmanship in the construction process and lack of proper inspection would continue to affect the qualities of buildings, if nothing was done to address it.

According to him, building registrations should be followed up with effective monitoring.

He said, "In this country, we do building registration as if it is a business for revenue collection. Someone comes for his building registration; how effective is the site inspection? These are important aspects I think the government needs to improve on."