

Special

Delta woman, son electrocuted, residents decry old cables

DELE OGUNYEMI

A widow, identified simply as Mary, and her son, Prince, have been electrocuted by a dangling high-tension cable at Erumukohwanen community in the Ughelli North Local Government Area of Delta State.

The cable was said to have fallen on the rooftop of a market stall on Friday when tragedy struck.

The sudden breakage reportedly sparked a fire that engulfed both Mary and Prince, throwing the entire community into grief.

Worried residents lamented that the high-tension cable, owned by the Benin Electricity Distribution Company, was still left dangling as of Saturday morning.

Aggrieved community members, while expressing concerns over the outdated nature of the BEDC cables in the area, emphasised the urgent need for an overhaul of the wires rather than repairs.

The Community Secretary General, Kingsley Emomate, appealed to the distribution company to replace obsolete cables in the community.

He said, "It is truly a pitiable and sympathetic incident. It is very unfortunate that lives have been lost. We experienced a similar tragedy over a year ago, when we lost three community members. This recurring loss of lives due to poor electrical materials provided by BEDC is unacceptable.

"I urge the government to intervene and ensure the

replacement of these aged cables that have been in use for over 40 years."

Also speaking on the incident, a community member, who identified herself as Prevail, blamed the BEDC for failing to replace the cables just as she pleaded with the

government to step in to prevent a recurrence of such calamity.

The Police Public Relations Officer, Delta State Command, DSP Bright Edafe, confirmed the incident to

our correspondent.

The spokesperson for the BEDC, Mrs Helen Ogagarue, could not be reached for comments on the incident as of the time of filing this report.

Anambra communities lament bad roads

IKENNA OBIANERI

RESIDENTS of Oba, in the Idemili South Local Government Area; Awada, Idemili North LGA; and Okpoko, Ogbaru LGA, of Anambra State, have lamented the deplorable condition of the Onitsha-Owerri Expressway and adjoining streets.

They said the situation had made residents prone to danger as many streets were overtaken by floodwater.

The people also said hoodlums extorted residents on the roads daily.

Our correspondent, who visited the area on Saturday, observed that the roads, especially the ever-busy expressway, were filled with water, while motorists and passersby struggled to avoid potholes.

This reporter also noted that the roadblocks

mounted by some naval ratings on both lanes of the expressway at Enamel Junction, where they extorted money from commercial drivers, worsened the pain of road users.

A resident of Oba, Chika Udeh, lamented that the Amanator section of the road was covered with refuse and floodwater.

Udeh said, "We trek every day as we walk on the edge of drainage in order to avoid floods. Most bus operators have refused to go beyond the Amanator Junction. When they get to that place, they forcefully drop off their passengers and make a U-turn.

"Both the federal and the state governments have not looked at the area, including the local government. We are always at the mercy of hoodlums at night."

A food vendor, who identified herself as Mama Joy, said commercial drivers and tricycle riders

charged as much as N300 for a journey that was supposed to be N50 or N100 because of the bad condition of the roads.

A commercial bus operator, Ifeanyi Nonso said plying the roads was high risk.

He explained that bus fares were increased because of the huge sums drivers spent on vehicle maintenance and at naval checkpoints.

The Chairman, Awada Central Community Development Association, Chief Gabriel Nkasi, noted that the CDA had observed an increase in robberies on the bad portions of the expressway.

An official of the Federal Ministry of Works and Housing, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said contracts to rehabilitate most of the bad roads had been awarded but there was no fund to finance them because of the Second Niger Bridge, which was just opened.