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2 fire fighters die, N400m goods destroyed in Onitsha midnight fire

BY OUR REPORTER ON DECEMBER 8, 2015

COVER, NATIONAL

From Aloysius Attah And Jeff Amechi Agbodo, Onitsha

Tears flowed freely yesterday at the Ochanja ultra modern market, Onitsha as a Sunday midnight fire ravaged the shoe dealers' section of the market destroying goods worth over N400million.

Unfortunately, two fire fighters from Okpoko Fire Service Station died while trying to put out the fire even as traders in other sections of the market closed their shops in solidarity yesterday.

Giving an insight into the incident, Chairman of Ochanja Shoe Dealers Association, Chief Nwabueze Umeh told Daily Sun that a mysterious fire started in a shop within the market at 5 p.m. on Sunday but they were able to quench the fire and went back home only to get another news at about 2 a.m. that another fire started in a different section of the market.

He said they immediately contacted men of the Okpoko Fire Station, who quickly mobilised to the scene but while they were at work, a decking slab from the shops caved in and killed one of the fire fighters instantly while the other had his spine broken. He died at the hospital where he was taken to for treatment. Umeh noted further that the tragedy which befell the fire fighters stalled further efforts to put out the fire leading to the destruction of many shops with goods estimated at N400 million lost to the inferno.

Governor Willie Obiano visited the market yesterday morning and promised to provide fire-fighting equipment to the traders and also assist victims.

Two of the affected traders, Boniface Amaizu from Oraifite and Iloduba John Kennedy told Daily Sun that they were alerted on phone at about 3 a.m. while they were in the village that Sunday but before they could get to the market by 4a.m, their shops and their entire goods had been consumed by the fire.

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