

27 die in Anambra accidents

•Scores injured as tanker loses control in Onitsha

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Jeff Amechi Agbodo, Onitsha and **Geoffrey Anyanwu**, Awka

Not less than 21 people were feared dead and many injured, yesterday, when a tanker laden with kerosene lost control at Upper Iweka, Onitsha, Anambra State.

The number of casualties could not be ascertained as at press time, but, an eyewitness said more than 21 persons died, while others sustained various degrees of injuries.

Chijoke Nworji, witness said the tanker lost control at MCC bus stop at the Enugu-Onitsha Expressway, when it ran from the expressway to the service lane, crushing everything on its way until it finally hanged by the gutter drainage at Abuja Park.

He said the casualties were mainly roadside traders, hawkers, food vendors, park loaders and passers by, adding that some of the bodies of the victims were crushed beyond recognition before they were picked and taken to hospital.

“As we are talking, the tanker killed more than 21 people, and many others who were injured will die in the hospital because of degrees of the injuries. The driver of the tanker just wanted to kill people because he had opportunity to force the vehicle to a stop where people were not many. I thank God that I ran away and got saved,” Nworji said.

The state Chairman of Nigerian Red Cross Society, Prof. Peter Emeka Katchy, who led the rescue team at the scene of the accident, said they had, so far, evacuated seven corpses to the Toronto Hospital morgue, at Upper Iweka, and four injured persons in another hospital.

He said: “A tanker loaded with kerosine lost control and rammed into people and killed a lot of them from MCC bus stop down to Peace park gate. So far, seven dead people have been deposited at Toronto hospital mortuary and one other person we took to the hospital is still receiving treatment. Three other injured people are at Beater Hospital at Onitsha-Owerri road. That is the number of casualties recorded, so far; others ones we don’t know.”

In 2015, a tanker laden with fuel lost control at the same point and went into flames, killing many people.

Meanwhile, an auto crash involving a heavy duty truck loaded with cement and a tipper has claimed six lives at Ibughubu Market, Umuchu, in Aguata Local Government of Anambra State.

The accident, which occurred at about 1:45 p.m, on Tuesday, was said to have claimed the lives of the two drivers and four other persons, while property worth millions of naira were destroyed and scores of traders injured.

An eye witness to Tuesday’s accident, involving a tipper with registration number, JJT-421XG, and a truck fully loaded with cement, said it also claimed the lives of one of the conductors and two traders who were in their shops doing their businesses.

Narrating what happened, Mr. Joshua Agbasiri, said the two trucks collided before they rammed into market stalls.

“The cement truck was on a high speed. It pushed the tipper to the other side of the market where it destroyed shops and inflicted injuries on some shop owners.”

Agbasiri, however, called on the government to quickly install speed breakers on the road to save the lives of the people as it was becoming a death trap.

Chairman of Ubughubu Village, Titus Ike, said the accident broke through three shops, belonging to one Okwudili Egbobuike and Nonso Ezekwelu.

“Nonso’s own was worse because it broke into three shops, with the owner and his mother becoming victims. There are other people I don’t have their details because I have not been to the hospital. Our village man, Aaron Ononuju, who is about 65 years, had been taken to mortuary.

“We are currently embarking on peaceful demonstration to the palace of our traditional ruler and other leaders of the community. We are going to install speed breakers on this road tomorrow because we are tired of this re-occurring accidents.

“This place is a valley, especially the market. We don’t want it to kill people again. Two years ago, we lost nine persons. We lost two students two months ago. We just lost three persons again.”

