

Kano gas explosion: NEMA recovers 9 bodies

• Minister mourns casualties

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From **Okwe Obi**, Abuja

The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) said it has recovered nine bodies from yesterday's gas explosion along Court Road in Sabon Gari, Kano State, while three bodies were damaged beyond recognition.

The explosion, which occurred near a private secondary school, Winners School, at about 9.30am, destroyed a residential building and affected part of the school, with many schoolchildren affected.

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NEMA's spokesman, Manzo Ezekiel, in a statement, yesterday, stated that the recovered bodies had been deposited in a morgue at Armed Forces Hospital, Kano State, while two people injured were receiving treatment at the same hospital.

"The nine dead bodies recovered from the collapsed building in Kano after an explosion from a gas cylinder in Sabon Gari area of Kano State have been deposited in the morgue at Armed Forces Hospital, Kano. Three of the bodies were damaged beyond recognition," he said.

He said the Director General, National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Mustapha Habib Ahmed, was at the site of the incident and coordinated the rescue operations.

"He mobilised excavators being used for the rescue operations and said NEMA team will ensure complete removal of the rubbles to retrieve all trapped persons.

"Furthermore, Mustapha Habib Ahmed instructed the NEMA rescue team to remain at the site until the conclusion of the rescue and to work together with security agencies and other response organisations present at the location.

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"NEMA is presently coordinating the rescue operations involving members of the Nigerian Red Cross, military, the Nigerian Police, Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps, Kano SEMA."

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Meanwhile, the Kano State Government, yesterday, dismissed insinuations that the incident was a bomb blast just as it clarified that the explosion did not occur in a school.

The state Commissioner for Information, Muhammad Garba, said the incident happened at an animal feed store opposite the school along Aba Road, in Sabon Gari area of Fagge Local Government.

He said while the cause of the explosion and the damage were yet to be officially ascertained, an investigation had since commenced to determine the cause, impact and measures to be taken.

Garba called on the people in the state, particularly those living in the area where the incident occurred, to remain calm, while the government, in collaboration with relevant agencies, were working on the matter.

The commissioner assured residents that the government would keep the public abreast of any development.

Reacting to the incident, the Minister of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development, Sadiya Umar Farouq, expressed shock and commiseration with the families of the victims and the Kano state government over the tragedy, describing it as painful and calamitous.

“This is a tragedy. A gas explosion, a collapsed building, death of many victims and persons still trapped in the rubbles... this is a very sad incident. I sympathise with the families of the dead and the government of Kano state.

“The spate of explosions in the country recently is alarming and we call on the appropriate authorities to do something quickly, to stop further explosions and building collapse in the country”.