

Rivers gas explosion: Death toll rises to 5

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From **Tony John**, Port Harcourt

The number of deaths in the gas explosion at Big Tree Oroazi, in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State has risen to five.

Three persons died yesterday , in addition to the two that passed on on Monday.

About 25 persons were reportedly involved in the explosion last Saturday, which occurred at a gas refilling shop allegedly caused by spark from a welding operation. It was gathered that most of the persons caught up in the inferno were passers-by.

Consequently, the Obio/Akpor council chairman, Chijioke Ihunwo, has banned gas retailing within residential places in the council.

He announced the ban during his visit to Sonabel Hospital where some of the victims who had high degree burns are receiving medical treatments.

Ihunwo also announced the setting up of a task force to monitor compliance and enjoined Community Development Committees (CDC) chairmen and you leaders to join in the campaign to forestall reoccurrence.

During the visit, the council chairman sympathized with the victims and their relatives, promising the council would foot their hospital bills.

Meanwhile, the State Commissioner of Police, Olugbenga Adepoju who visited the survivors at the Rivers State University Teaching Hospital, Old GRA, Port Harcourt, sympathized with the victims.

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He said the Area Commander in charge of Oroazi community has also visited victims of the explosion in other hospitals.

He advised residents of the state to be safety conscious when using gas cylinder.

The police boss also urged residents to report to relevant authorities when the persons dealing on refilling gas are engaged in unsafe acts capable of endangering people's lives.

He described the condition of the patients as pathetic and worrisome while praying for their quick recovery.

The Chief Medical Director (CMD) of the hospital, Chizindu Alikor, who received the CP and his team, said 16 persons were brought in on Saturday, January 4, 2025.

Alikor disclosed that 12 were adults and four children, adding that the hospital has been working tirelessly to ensure they are stable.

Alikor disclosed that with the full support from Rivers State Government, Commissioner for Health, the hospital is attending to the victims.

He said other concerned members of the public have also been coming around.

He said that unfortunately two persons, an adult and a child have died, but the hospital was doing its best to ensure that the patients were stable and in good condition.