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Saving Lives On Lagos Roads

Posted on Aug 10 2016 - 2:05am by **Muritala Ayinla** Views: 9

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Recently, Governor Akinwunmi Ambode gave a marching order to the Lagos State Emergency Management Agency, (LASEMA) to embark on removal of broken-down vehicles, tankers and other heavy duty trucks on Lagos roads. The question is, has the development saved more lives and averted tragedies? Muritala Ayinla asks

November 20, 2013, no fewer than eight people lost their lives when a truck veered off its lane and crashed into a stationary vehicle at Oshodi. Five other vehicles got trapped in the ghastly accident which claimed the lives of young and old, many of whom were passengers in the commercial vehicles that was waiting to be conveyed to Isheri/Osun and Ijegun areas.

Also, many music lovers would not forget in a hurry April 22, 2010 when Nigeria lost of one her finest rappers, Olaitan Olanipekun popularly known as Dagrín. His car reportedly rammed into stationary truck around 2.00am April 14, 2010 in front of Alakara Police Station, off Agege Motor Road, Mushin.

The ace artiste died eight days later as a result of severe injuries he sustained in the crash, throwing many Nigerians and his fans across the globe into mourning mood.

Similarly on March, 4 2016, a widow and mother of three, Alhaja Fatimoh Adebambo, lost her life with other motorists at Abule Tailor Bus stop end of Lagos- Abeokuta Expressway when they got crushed to death under a cement laden truck.

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In the tragic incident, two vehicles rammed into the stationary truck on the busy Expressway, resulting in the instant death of Adebambo, who drove a Sienna bus, while the driver of the other car sustained serious injuries.

Residents and other eyewitnesses blamed the incident on the failure of the Federal Road Safety Corps and the police for not removing the truck on the road as and when due. It's usually a sudden sight for most motorists while on full speed.

Many of the broken-down vehicles are dangerously left on the roads with no caution signs to alert other oncoming motorists. Some of these killer vehicles are found at dangerous bends or curves on roads, leaving oncoming motorists and their passengers at the risk of a fatal accident.

Sometimes, the lucky and experienced drivers skilfully manoeuvre on sighting them while the inexperienced or not too lucky ones collide with them, leaving the driver and occupants of the vehicle critically injured or dead.

This ugly but avoidable dangerous scenarios are common on Nigerian roads and Lagos State by extension. From the city metropolis to the Expressways, these



abandoned vehicles and trucks cause more havoc than imagine.

They are often responsible for many of the long hours of gridlock experienced in most parts of the country, especially Lagos State. But to check the needless deaths and road crashes resulting from abandoned broken-down vehicles and trucks on the roads, Governor Akinwunmi Ambode of Lagos recently ordered the newly inaugurated Lagos State Emergency Agency Response Unit also known as LRU to commence the removal of faulty vehicles on Lagos roads.

The governor also directed the agency to carry out surveillance of major highways at night with a view to removing any vehicle or truck that may likely cause accidents or gridlock.

Hence, to promptly respond to the emergency need and avert disaster as well as save man hours daily lost in the traffic, the Response Unit has also been decentralised to two: Command and Control Dispatch point in Alausa and Cappa Dispatch point near Oshodi.

From the inception of the night surveillance operation, LASEMA Response Unit has proven to many discerning Lagosians and indeed Nigerians that no amount is too



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much to ensure safety of lives and property. The multi-million Naira investments in the state emergency unit are being felt by the residents and motorists.

New Telegraph observed that with the night surveillance for removal of broken down vehicles, several lives have been saved while fatal accidents have been averted. Many beneficiaries of this kind gesture are victims of road accident who were trapped either in or beneath heavy trucks.

Prior to the initiative, many of such victims succumbed to death after waiting endlessly for help but eventually gave up the ghost before the help could come. It is also a known fact that several lives of innocent citizens being taken to the hospital by ambulance are lost in the gridlock caused by broken down vehicles especially some heavy duty trucks popularly called 'container.'

While unveiling the LASEMA Response Unit, LRU, Ambode had said that he was not



comfortable with the loss of innocent residents in the state to the avoidable accidents.

"The security and welfare of Lagosians is a responsibility I do not take lightly and one that this administration is dedicating considerable resources to fulfilling through all our initiatives over the past 12 months.

"Although it is imperative to state that the intent is to prevent emergencies and mishaps, we may not be able to completely eliminate them.

As a result, we must be ready to swing into action and save lives and property whenever these unfortunate events occur. Many people lose their lives and sources of livelihood, not from the initial incident, but from the delay in the response time due to inadequate resources and training," he said.

According to him, the Lagos State Emergency Management Agency (LASEMA) has been empowered by law to coordinate all the first responder activities – the Lagos State Fire Service, the Lagos State Ambulance Service and the Lagos State Traffic Management Agency.

He said the state has equipped the emergency agency with trained personnel and equipment to effectively carry out its objective which is to save lives and livelihoods. Going by the directive of Ambode, New Telegraph gathered that the LRU now carries out surveillance on the major high way to remove any vehicle or truck that may likely cause accidents at night.

The first dispatch point takes off from Cappa, moves to Ijora and down to Abeokuta Express road to Lagos end of Sango. It was also learnt that the second towing truck

dispatches from the Command and Control Alausa, moves to Berger end of Lagos and turns back to 3rd mainland en route Lekki Expressway.

When New Telegraph visited the LRU centre at Oshodi, one of the newly recruited emergency personnel, who pleaded anonymity, said that Governor Ambode is taking the state emergency management agency from disaster management to disaster prevention through the investments in the training and life-saving equipment. Speaking with New Telegraph, some motorists, many of whom are owners of private and commercial vehicles, also confirmed that they have benefited from the gesture, saying their vehicles were removed and towed away from the road free of charge.

"For me, I must commend Governor Ambode and LASEMA for this. When vehicle develops problems, one is usually stranded. As motorists, you now have hope that LASEMA will come to your aid and not to extort.

This, I think, is another creative thinking on the part of the Governor, who charged the agency to embark on this task," a driver said. Also Commenting on the impact of the removal of road impediments, Mr Dejo Kolawole, a banker, expressed surprise over sudden free flow of traffic on major roads during peak period.

"The exercise is good because people going to work are safe of any overnight incidents that might likely cause delay for those going to work in the morning. The towing exercise is also carried out without charges.

This is really good. It shows the government cares about lives," he said. Also speaking, Bawa Sodiq, a truck driver, said he was surprised that his faulty truck was towed free of charge, saying that he was full of appreciation to the agency when his truck was towed away by 11:20pm at Ajah.

"When I first saw the LRU personnel, I thought they would arrest me but was surprised when they said that their mandate was to help me remove the vehicle. We are happy that the agency is also working with other agencies such as LASTMA, Fire Service and LASAMBUS. What a better way to run an all-inclusive government!"

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