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# Infant, seven others die in fresh Lagos explosion

...vehicles, 25 houses, hotel, church burnt • Sanwo-Olu: It's a sad occurrence  
• Adhere to safety regulations, NNPC tells facilities' owners

An infant, a woman and six others yesterday lost their lives in yet another gas explosion in Lagos. Several other people were injured in the early morning explosion at Baruwa area of Lagos.

Several vehicles and more than 25 houses and structures, among them a hotel, a church, six blocks of shops and a private primary school, were burnt in the fire which accompanied the explosion.

This came barely two weeks after about 30 people were injured in a gas explosion at Iju-Ishaga area of Lagos.

Yesterday explosion, which reportedly emanated from the Best Roof Cooking Gas, Unity Bus Stop, Fatade area of Baruwa, occurred about 5.45am.

The Director-General (DG), Lagos State Emergency Management Agency (LASEMA), Olu-femi Oke-Osanyintolu, said the agency's emergency response unit had been deployed in the area.

He said: "At 10:40 hours, the explosion which occurred about 06:00 hours, has been contained. The gas emission has been identified and curtailed. Damping down is ongoing. Investigations indicate that this was an entirely avoidable incident caused by carelessness on the part of the operator."

"Disaster assessment is as follows: five fatalities recovered, eight casualties with major burns who have been transferred to the Gbagada General Hospital Burr Unit. Twenty-five houses damaged of which 10 were classified as severely affected."

Oke-Osanyintolu added that in addition to the houses razed, shops were razed by the fire. A private primary school as well as a hotel were also badly affected.

The LASEMA boss urged Lagosians to report unsavoury and dangerous practices within their neighbourhoods to the relevant agencies.

He promised that measures would be taken to forestall recurrence.

Witnesses said a gas truck was offloading the product at the plant while the company's generator was running.

According to them, the gas caught fire from the generator which resulted in the explosion that engulfed the area.

The New Telegraph learnt that the explosion flung the truck across the road, which made the fire to spread to other parts of the community.

One of the victims, Mr. John Abioye, whose house was affected by the explosion, said he reasoned that terrorists had invaded the community when the explosion occurred.

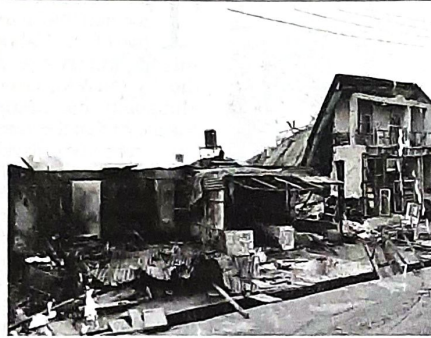
Abioye said he was sleeping when he heard a loud noise from



Fire fighters at the scene of the explosion



Another part of the explosion



Affected buildings by the gas explosion



A body being carried out of the gas explosion. PHOTOS: TOBI FAYELU

the gas station.

He said: "I rushed into my children's room and woke them up, so as to escape from the area. As God would have it, immediately my family and I stepped out of my house the fire extended to my house. Thank God none of us was in the house."

"Government has a lot to do concerning approval given to gas stations to be in residential areas. Now we have lost about eight people, including an elderly woman and one kid to the explosion. We have lost millions of naira worth of properties and souls that cannot come back. I don't know how to fix my house back now, because I am a retired teacher."

Another resident of the area, who gave his name as Abdulahi, said but for the quick intervention of the firefighters, the explosion would have engulfed the whole community.

He said: "I was preparing to go to the mosque, when I heard the loud noise from the explosion. It was like a bomb. A few minutes later, I saw fire from the gas station."

"There was nothing most of us the residents could do to salvage the situation because the inferno

was too huge to combat. A few minutes later, firefighters arrived at the scene and continued to battle with it."

"The inferno damaged a lot of things in the community. Some of the staff of the gas station also died in the explosion. What happened in our community was a repeat of what occurred at Abule Ado."

The state Commissioner of Police, Hakeem Odumosu, and his team also raced to the scene and the spot-assessment of the situation.

Odumosu said he was at the scene to have details of what happened.

He said: "We have also deployed our men to the scene to prevent breakdown of law and order."

"We are going to work with other relevant agencies to make sure that such an incident is prevented. I also want to warn those carrying phones, taking pictures to stay away to prevent escalation of the explosion."

"I want you the elders of this community to be security conscious, because some people who came with the pretence that they came to sympathise with the bereaved families could be rob-

bers, therefore, you have to be conscious."

"We also sympathise with those who lost their lives in the inferno and those whose properties were affected."

Meanwhile, Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu has expressed sadness over the explosion.

The governor described the incident as a sad memory in the life of his administration.

Sanwo-Olu said the preliminary and final reports on the cause of the explosion suggested negligence on the part of the gas plant operators.

The governor vowed that his government would take stiffer measures against operators of gas plants and other combustible items to avoid future recurrence.

He said: "The gas explosion this morning has left a sour taste in my mouth. It is a reminder of the dark episode of March this year at Abule Ado Soba when innocent lives were lost to gas explosions of monumental proportion and properties destroyed. I really can't believe that we would witness another such incident, no matter how little."

"I wish to therefore register my heartfelt condolences to the

families of those that lost their loved ones in the fire. I pray that God grant their souls eternal rest."

"The reports I got showed that the explosion could have been avoided if the operators of the gas plant had adhered to safety guidelines. Lives would have been saved and properties too would not have been affected."

Sanwo-Olu restated his administration's commitment to safety of lives and properties of Lagosians by ensuring that operators follow strict regulations in the operations of gas plants.

On this note, the governor said the Lagos State Safety Commission and the Lagos State Environmental Protection Agency (LASEPA) had been notified of the next line of action.

He commended "the first responders who acted promptly on the distress call and worked very quickly to contain the fire by not allowing the ruins go beyond what we currently have."

Sanwo-Olu enjoined residents to always report any suspicious activities which might be harmful to the citizens in their neighbourhood to the appropriate government agencies for preventive measures to be taken.

Also, the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) has warned gas plants and other petroleum products' facilities in the country to ensure strict adherence to safety rules and regulations to avoid incidents of explosion.

The corporation, which stated this in a statement on the gas plant explosion in Lagos, commiserated with the government and people of Lagos State, and particularly the residents of Baruwa area.

Its Group General Manager, Group Public Affairs Division, Dr. Kennie Obateru, said that "NNPC feels particularly sad at the loss of lives and property, caused by the incident barely a few weeks after a similar incident at Iju Ishaga area of the state".

He said though NNPC's pipelines were not anywhere close to the location of the incident, the corporation swiftly mobilised its Health, Safety and Environment (HSE) Team, in collaboration with other relevant agencies of Lagos State government and ensured that the situation was promptly brought under control.