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Bayelsa govt, NOSDRA staff among victims of Agip pipeline explosion

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By Samuel Oyadongha

Yenagoa—No fewer than 13 persons died in last Thursday's Agip pipeline explosion along Tebidaba-Clough Creek trunk line in the mangrove swamp of Azuzuama, Southern Ijaw Local Government Area of Bayelsa State.

Among victims of the explosion are staff of Bayelsa State Ministry of Environment and the National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency, NOSDRA.

Bayelsa State government, which confirmed the death toll in a statement yesterday, expressed regrets over the explosion.

The statement by the Information and Orientation Commissioner, Esueme Dan-Kikile, also said six staff of an indigenous oil servicing firm, M. G. Vogas, a soldier on guard duty and two Agip staff, were also killed in explosion.

The deceased staff of the monitoring unit of the Environment Ministry in Bayelsa State government is an indigene of Nembe LGA, while the NOSDRA staff is from Enugu State.

Also among the dead is an indigene of the host community of Azuzuama, who was part of the Joint Investigation Visit, JIV, team.

Cause

Dan-Kikile said: "Bayelsa State government regrets to confirm the occurrence of a fire explosion of July 9. From available information, the incident occurred during repairs of pipeline, following an oil spill.

“The incident resulted in the death of 13 persons. Government uses this opportunity to condole with the families of the deceased on this tragic loss.

“Government also sympathises with the injured persons and affected communities, and assures them of adequate support towards the treatment and recovery of the injured.

“Government is working with relevant agencies to ensure a comprehensive investigation and to unravel the cause and circumstances of the explosion.

“We will also determine and undertake appropriate measures to fully address this tragedy and to prevent future occurrence.

“In the meantime, government wishes to appeal to the affected families and immediate communities in the incident area for their cooperation in the efforts to properly address this disaster and its sad consequences.”

Shocked Bayelsa Environment Commissioner, Mr. Inuiro Wills, in reply to *Vanguard* enquiry said: “It is a tragedy for us all. We lost one of our staff and one staff of NOSDRA.”

Hospitals

At the Niger Delta University Teaching Hospital, Okolobiri, where two of the survivors were taken, a source, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the victims had been referred to the University of Port Harcourt Teaching Hospital, UPTH, River State, due to the degree of burns they suffered.

Meanwhile, the state police command in its preliminary report, confirmed the death of a serving military personnel in the explosion.

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