

Vanguard

Woman, 7-year-old daughter die in Calabar inferno

on October 16, 2015 / in News 2:02 am / Comments

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CALABAR—A woman and her seven-year-old daughter died Wednesday from a generator fire which also razed their apartment located at 15 Andem Street, 8 miles, on the outskirts of Calabar metropolis in Cross Rivers State.



(<http://www.vanguardngr.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/fire.jpg>) *Vanguard* learned that two other family members, including husband of the deceased, Mr. Lawrence, and his brother-in-law, who also sustained burns are currently hospitalised.

Old generator set

It was gathered that the duo were trying to refill the generator with petrol when it caught fire.

However, a source who preferred anonymity, revealed to *Vanguard* that the generator had not been in use for a long time, and that the husband of the deceased had instructed his brother-in-law to re-engage it.

Having fuelled the tank, the young man was said to have yanked off the cord before the generator exploded.

A neighbour, Mrs. Gift Peters, said of the incident: “It had been long since they used that generator, so the man, Mr. Lawrence, asked the boy to start the generator and warm it properly since it had been long since they used it. So they bought the fuel and put in it. Immediately they started the generator, it exploded.”

Explosion

Vanguard gathered that the explosion set off other generators belonging to the deceased, and also that of the occupants of the twin flat which were all lined up at the backyard and walled in by burglary proof.

Occupants of the twin flat were said to have fled upon sighting the fire, but the deceased and her daughter were reported to have been trapped inside their own apartment as the doors and windows apparently were shut in the heat of the flames.

Eyewitnesses said they noticed the fire at about 8:45 pm Wednesday, and battled to put out the flames while alerting the Quick Intervention Squad, QIS.

One neighbour, Mr. Age Edward, said: “When I heard that there was a fire, I rushed over to assist since they are my neighbours. When I arrived, the fire was so thick that we could not help out.

“We tried all we could to quench the fire, it was so horrible, it was later I heard that the man’s wife and child were inside.

“Personally, I contacted Quick Response, QIS. I called over three times, they did not respond. The first time it was busy, the second time it rang and stopped, the third time, it rang and stopped. I did not have Fire Service number on the phone I was using yesterday. “I didn’t bother to call anybody again. I tried my best since I am equally a public servant. We did our best, though it was not enough.”

When *Vanguard* contacted fire division of the QIS, the officials said they responded promptly, contrary to neighbours who disclosed that the fire men arrived two hours after they were called, and that they ran out of water.

Unit Commander of Fire Service at the QIS, Mr. Daniel Ibor, said his men arrived the scene 30 minutes after they were called due to the distance from Calabar to 8 Miles, which is on the outskirts of the city.

He said: “We were called at about 9:30 pm and immediately we turned out for the fire. It is quite unfortunate that the fire involved fuel.

‘We did our best’

“Despite the distance, we still did our best to get there on time. We have been asking people not to put fuel into a steaming generator. We advised them to allow it cool first.

“If it was a free burning fire, by the time we got there, we still could’ve saved a lot. Our response really stopped the fire from spreading to other property.”

He further explained that the water in their truck got depleted and that they had to collect more from the fire unit of the Nigerian Ports Authority, NPA, and not from a private water tank as some eyewitnesses reported.