

Black weekend in Rivers as pregnant woman, others die, 79 vehicles burnt in fire disaster



***Gov Fubara visits scene, promises compensation**

***MOSOP mourns, tasks FG on speedy completion of E/West Rd**

No fewer than 79 vehicles were destroyed in the [fire incident](#) that occurred Friday on the Eleme axis of the East-West Road.

While the actual number of deaths is unknown, it was gathered that not less than seven persons were burnt beyond recognition.

All the vehicles affected were said to be in a queue around Indorama Gate and Akpajo Bridge when the incident happened.

It was learnt that a truck had hit a fuel-laden tanker that was carrying Premium Motor Spirit, PMS, leading to the inferno.

An eyewitness who simply identified himself as Deeyah said many vehicles that were affected made efforts to escape but could not.

Deeyah said: “When the fire started, most of the vehicles in the traffic made efforts to escape but the fire was just too fast for them.”

It's unfortunate —Fubara

However, Rivers State governor, Siminalayi Fubara, has described the disaster as unfortunate.

Fubara, who visited the scene in the company of the state Commissioner of Police, Olatunji Disu, and Rivers State Commissioner for Energy and Natural Resources, Mr Uchechukwu Nwafor, yesterday, pledged to compensate victims. The governor explained that he got a call from the Managing Director of Indorama Petrochemical and Fertiliser Company Limited in Eleme Local Government Area, informing him of the incident.

He said: “We are here to see for ourselves and get first-hand information on the incident.

“About 7.30 – 8 pm, we got information on the gravity of the incident. I was told that it was caused by a tanker vehicle that was conveying Premium Motor Spirit. “I got the information through the MD of Indorama, and I immediately alerted the security agencies to make sure they took control of the security situation in the area.

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“And from what we are seeing this morning, it was not a pleasant case. We recorded a huge number of vehicles being destroyed and lives lost.”

“I have already asked relevant agencies to give us a full brief so that we can come into the situation fully to see how we can support the bereaved families, and also cushion the effect of the losses.

“We all know the situation of this road. It is really unfortunate. Most of our people, when plying this road, should ply it with caution.

“I believe strongly that this situation would have been avoidable if motorists had behaved properly. But it is late already. The damage has happened. This is the situation we have found ourselves in. We will see how we can control the aftermath.”

MOSOP mourns

Meanwhile, the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People, MOSOP, has

expressed condolence over the [fire incident](#), noting that the East-West Road has become a death trap.

A statement by its Publicity Secretary, Comrade Saviour Imeabe, noted that the original intention for the construction of the road was for safe travel, but regretted that the road has become a source of death.

He said: “MOSOP condoles with the families who have lost their loved ones in the devastating East-West Road fire disaster. Once again, we find ourselves mourning the loss of precious lives on a road that has long been a dangerous facility for the people of Ogoni, as well as for commuters in the Niger Delta region.

“It is with a heavy heart that we reflect on the fact that the East-West Road, originally intended to facilitate safe passage for travellers, has become a treacherous pathway leading to tragic deaths. The frequency of accidents and fatalities along this route is a stark reminder of the urgent need for comprehensive action to rectify its dangerous conditions.

“We regret the recurring incidents where trucks fall off the poorly-maintained road, resulting in tragic loss of lives. The recent calamity, involving a petroleum-laden tanker that ignited into a blazing fire, has further underscored the pressing need for immediate intervention by all relevant authorities.”

Number of casualties yet to be confirmed—Police

However, the state police command confirmed that a pregnant woman was among the people who lost their lives in the inferno.

Public Relations Officer of the command, Grace Iringe-Koko, a Superintendent of Police, said that there were many casualties but that only four could be confirmed at press time.

She said: “At approximately 8:30 p.m. on Friday, April 26, 2024, the Rivers State Police Command received a distress call regarding a fire incident along East-West Road near Indorama Gate, Eleme, caused by a tanker explosion. Immediate action was taken by contacting the fire department and mobilizing operatives to the scene.

“Upon arrival, a joint operation of the Police and firefighters successfully extinguished the fire at 10:30 p.m. However, over seventy cars were engulfed, and several individuals were trapped. Efforts led to the rescue of many, though the total casualties are yet to be determined. Regrettably, four individuals, including a pregnant woman, have been confirmed dead, and those injured are receiving treatment at nearby hospitals.

“On Saturday, April 27, 2024, the Commissioner of Police Olatunji R. Disu, and the operations department visited the scene to motivate the rescue team and extend condolences to the affected. He was accompanied by various sister agencies.

“Rescue operations are ongoing, with officers deployed to evacuate burnt vehicles and maintain law and order. The Rivers State Police Command remains dedicated to supporting those affected and ensuring public safety.”