

METRO

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# Rivers gas explosion: 3 confirmed dead as CP visits victims



•Jehovah's witnesses more of victims in Rivers gas fire —Source

•Victim's relation blames gas dealer for ordeal

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**PORT HARCOURT**—Three persons have been confirmed dead in the weekend's gas explosion fire in Rivers State.

This came as Rivers State Commissioner of Police, Olugbenga Adepoku, yesterday, visited the surviving victims at the Rivers State University Teaching Hospital, RSUTH.

Meanwhile, a family friend of one of the victims, known as Ayo, narrated that the owner of the ill-fated gas shop, was 'a notorious businessman.'

Recall that on Saturday, a gas cylinder exploded when a vendor was reportedly refilling it, leaving over 20 people with various degrees of burns.

The incident happened in the Big Three area of Oroazi community, Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of the state.

It was gathered that a family of four, father, mother and two children were severely affected in the tragic incident.

After the incident 15 of the victims were taken to Rivers State University Teaching Hospital while about five were moved to a health facility within Oroazi for treatment.

CP Adepoku who sympathised with the victims, said his Area Commander in charge of Oroazi community has also visited victims of the explosion in other hospital.

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He advised residents of the state to be safety conscious when using gas cylinder and urged them to report to relevant authorities when the persons in business of refilling gas were engaged in unsafe act that can cause accident that may result to injuries and loss of lives.

The Rivers CP described the condition of the patients as pathetic and worrisome while praying for their quick recovery.

Also, the Chief Medical Director, CMD, of the hospital, Prof. Chizindu Alikor, who received the Commissioner of Police and his team, said 16 persons were brought including 12 adults and four children and the hospital have been working tirelessly to ensure they are stable.

Alikor disclosed that with the full support from Rivers State Government, Commissioner for Health, the hospital was attending to the victims.

He said other well meaning Nigerians have also been coming.

Alikor disclosed that two persons, an adult and a child have died but the hospital was doing its best to ensure the patients are stable and in good condition.

**Jehovah witness members more of victims in Rivers gas fire —Source**

It was also gathered, yesterday, that members of Jehovah Witness were among the victims of the gas explosion fire that occurred in Rivers State.

A source, who is among the medical personnel managing the victims of the fire incident at the Rivers State University Teaching Hospital, disclosed that Jehovah Witness members were more of the victims.

The source noted that the Witness members were reportedly on their usual house-to-house preaching when the tragedy struck.

The source, who could not give that actual number of the Witness involved said some leaders of the Faith had already come in from Abuja and were taking all necessary steps to ensure that their members and other involved were stable.

The source also said that a good Nigerian, who was at the hospital when the victims of the fire incident were brought in immediately made some payment for the treatment of the victims.

The source confirmed that all the patients were given attention on arrival, adding that the Chief Medical Director of the Hospital, Prof. Alikor Chizindu, had mobilised over 30 medical doctors in the health facility to the Accident and Emergency Department of the hospital to give adequate attention to the victims.

But a friend to one of the victims, disclosed that three of the people involved in the fire incident had lost their lives days after the tragedy.

The source said a man identified as Ayo, and his daughter, who were burnt alongside son and wife, died.

He said while the five-year-old daughter of Ayo died on Sunday after, that Ayo died, yesterday.

He also noted that a sales girl in a boutique that was also burnt died Monday and was buried at a Cemetery in Port Harcourt, yesterday.

He said: "Three people have died. The daughter of Ayo died on Sunday after. The girl was seriously burnt, even her father, Ayo, had escaped with small burns when the fire started.

"He remembered that his two children were in the fire. He entered the fire and rescued his son.

He entered again and brought out his daughter. By this time, the fire had affected him very well. His whole body pilled off. Even his cloth burnt off.

"His daughter died on Sunday, while himself died on Tuesday. Ayo's wife and the son are still in the hospital."

Victim's relation blames gas dealer for ordeal

Also, a family friend of the Ayos narrated that the owner of the ill-fated Gas shop, was "a notorious business man."

The Ayo's relation who refused to disclose her name, said: "Chidi never took safety into consideration in doing the business. Two weeks before Christmas, there was a fire incident in the same shop. He never listened to advice.

"He was never mindful of the safety of others. That was why Ayo whose shop is next to Chidi's was affected by the fire. His entire family was in the shop that evening: his two children and wife. I was always there but that day I decided to visit a friend.

"Because of the carelessness of one selfish man, I have lost a friend and brother, including his daughter, who died two days after the fire incident," she narrated.

How it happened

A source in the area, who was privy to the development, but gave his name simply as Ezekiel, noted that the incident happened about 2p.m.

He narrated: "We were in our office when we heard a heavy sound. It was not long, people started shouting fire. People were running in different direction. Those who came out were on fire.

"There was blue flame everywhere. Even a taxi that was passing with some of the passengers in the car were burnt. People working in other shops were affected. Because it is gas, the fire travelled fast and far and burnt many people and property."