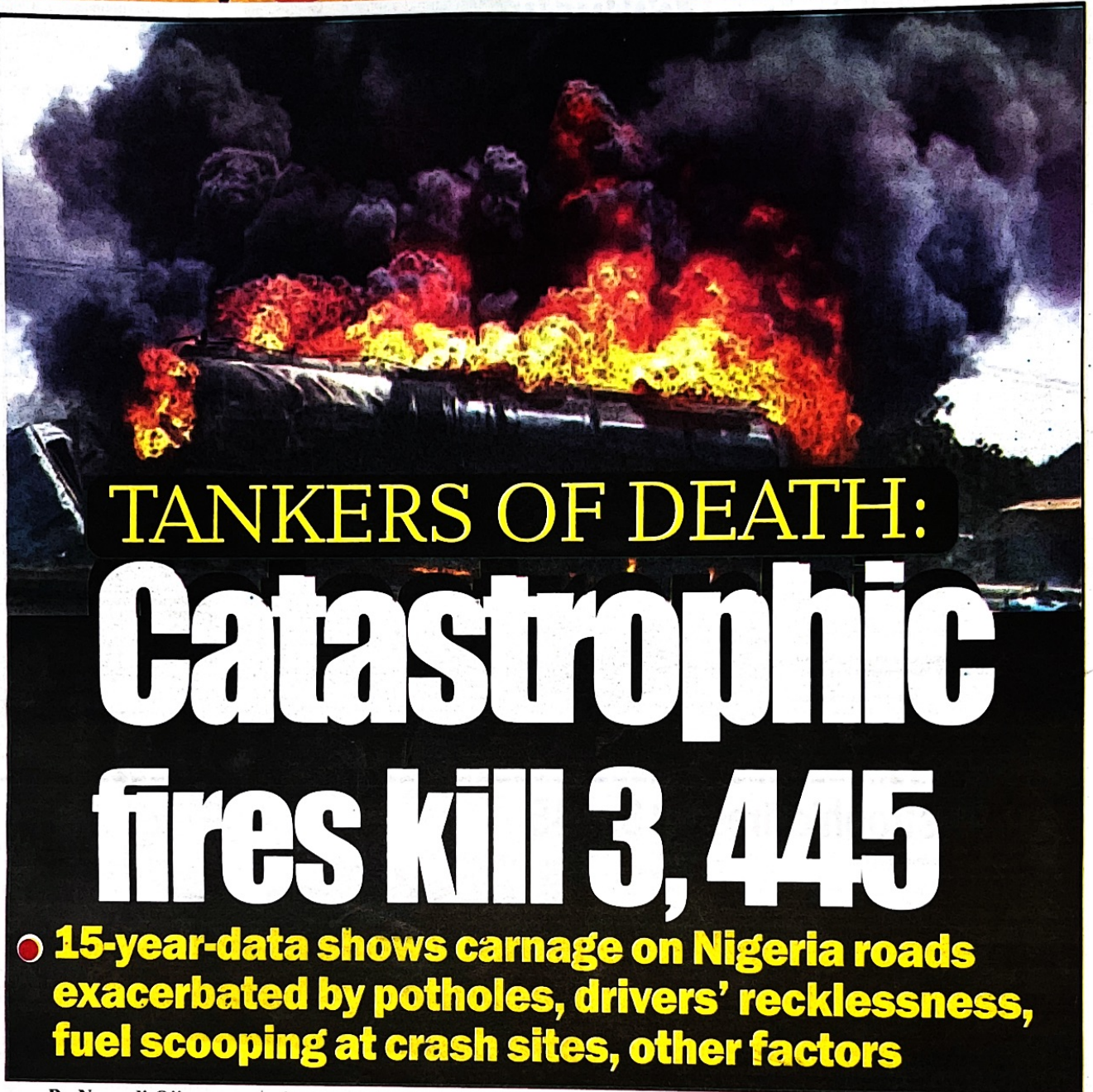


Story OF THE Week



TANKERS OF DEATH: Catastrophic fires kill 3,445

● **15-year-data shows carnage on Nigeria roads exacerbated by potholes, drivers' recklessness, fuel scooping at crash sites, other factors**

By Nnamdi Ojiego

Nigeria's roads have become a killing field, with fuel tanker crashes and fires claiming thousands of lives over the past 15 years.

The statistics are staggering: About 3,445 people, according to data independently collected by Sunday Vanguard, lost their lives in the crashes, leaving behind grieving families and shattered communities.

The sheer scale of the tragedy is a damning indictment of the country's transportation infrastructure and the lax safety standards that have allowed these disasters to occur with alarming frequency.

The human cost is incalculable, but the economic toll is also significant.

The destruction of property, loss of livelihoods, and the strain on emergency services all take a heavy toll on the nation's resources.

Tankers play a crucial role in the transportation of petroleum products across the country, but frequent accidents involving them — often accompanied by fires and explosions — remain a persistent danger.

Sadly, despite the high frequency of the crashes, there is a notable lack of adequate data to study and understand the pattern of petroleum tanker accidents in the country.

This has made it challenging for relevant stakeholders to implement effective strategies for preventing these incidents.

The economic toll of the accidents is also substantial, as they often result in the destruction of property, including homes, businesses and vehicles, worth billions of naira.

In this report, Sunday Vanguard reviews fuel tanker accidents in Nigeria from January 2010 to January 2025 and reports that the period under review saw a staggering number of accidents, including over 2,500 tanker crashes and about 3,445 fatalities.

The most recent major tragedies occurred on January 18, 2025, when a fuel tanker exploded near Dikko Junction in Suleja, Niger State, killing at least 98 people and January 25, 2025 at Ugwu Onyeama in Enugu State in which over 20 people were burnt alive.

This latest incidents underscore the alarming death toll associated with tanker accidents in the country.

Deadly Incidents

One of the deadliest incidents occurred on October 15, 2024, in Majia, Jigawa State, where explosion from an overturned tanker killed 181 people.

This marked 2024 as the deadliest year for tanker-related accidents, with a total of 266 fatalities.

Noteworthy incidents also include the 2019 Onitsha, Anambra State explosion, where a petrol-laden tanker crashed, resulting in the death of five people and the destruction of over 40 buildings.

Another explosion occurred in Lagos State on June 27, 2018, when a tanker fell on the Otedola Bridge, causing a fire that killed over 10 people and destroyed more than 50 vehicles.

In Benue State on July 2024, a petrol tanker explosion killed at least 45 people and injured over 100 when locals attempted to scoop fuel from the wreckage.

On January 2019, a tanker explosion in the Odukpani area of Cross River State killed approximately 60 people who were trying to collect spilled fuel.

Similar incident occurred in Rivers State in July 2012 when a tanker accident resulted in 104 deaths when people tried

to scoop fuel from a tanker after it crashed.

Breakdown

A breakdown of accident statistics reveals a troubling trend in fatalities, with 2019 recording 173 deaths and 161 injuries.

The year 2020 saw over 1,500 fuel tanker accidents, claiming at least 535 lives. Other years with significant accidents include:

2010: 461 accidents
2011: 180 accidents
2012: 179 accidents
2013: 315 accidents
2014: 271 accidents
2015: 331 accidents
2016: 359 accidents
2017: 308 accidents

As Nigeria struggles to develop its economy and improve the lives of its citizens, it is clear that addressing the scourge of fuel tanker crashes must be a

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