

Lightning strikes 5 family members dead [Zambia]

Written by Davies M.M Chanda Thursday, 24 November 2011 06:42

FIVE members of one family on Tuesday afternoon died instantly after being struck by lightning in Kasansama area in Mkushi. Central Province police commissioner Solomon Jere and acting Mkushi District police officer-in-charge Grace Chewe confirmed the incident in separate interviews yesterday. The deceased were identified as Steven Mwape, aged 32, his wife Albina Mwewa-Mwape, 30, and their children Belinda Mwape, 8, Junior, 6 and a one-week-old baby.

Dr Jere said the victims were struck around 13:00 hours while they were resting in the house.

The father and the baby have since been buried while the bodies of the other three members of the family were still in Mkushi District Hospital mortuary. One child from the six-member family survived and was being kept by well-wishers. Ms Chewe appealed to members of the community to always be ready to help during tragedies such as the Kasansama lightning incident. Meanwhile, five police houses in Kansenshi and a Catholic Church in Chifubu Township in Ndola were damaged following heavy rain and winds on Tuesday afternoon. The winds that swept through Ndola on Tuesday afternoon left a trail of destruction in Chifubu Township while some roofs at the recently-commissioned houses at Kansenshi Police Station were blown off.

Copperbelt Province Permanent Secretary Christopher Mutembo said five police houses were damaged including three from the recently-commissioned units. Mr Mutembo, who undertook an inspection yesterday, said the damage on the new houses was not extensive and that the contractor had already repaired two of them as of yesterday. He said the other two were old houses and that one of them was extensively damaged, compelling the officer occupying it to move out. "We are currently looking at how we can quickly repair the house in liaison with the Ministry of Works and Supply," he said. Ireen Ngenda of Chifubu Police Station, who had half of the roof of her house ripped off, said the family was not hurt although they were in the house when the wind struck. At the Catholic Church, a bell tower collapsed and damaged part of the roof and porch.

A **Times** reporter found the church yard filled with rubble from the collapsed tower as church members worked to clear it. Chifubu Parish chairperson, Mathias Chipulu said the 10-metre tower collapsed onto the veranda, which was extensively damaged. He said there were no people inside the church or near the tower at the time the incident happened.- — **ZANIS/Times Reporter**