Dump Truck Flips, Killing 25 Indonesian Plantation Workers

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JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — A dump truck packed with more than 60 Indonesian plantation workers and their families overturned, killing at least 25 and injuring dozens, police and a doctor said Wednesday. At least three children were among the dead.

The passengers were riding in the back of the open truck Tuesday night when the driver swerved to avoid damage in the road, which was under construction, and the vehicle flipped over near Sampit town in Central Kalimantan, police spokesman Made Ardana said.

Ardana said 25 people were killed instantly. But some survivors said a slow rescue effort resulted in deaths.

The employees of PT Maju Aneka Sawit, a palm oil producer, were returning from a local market, Ardana said. The driver was detained and faces charges of negligence, he said.

"People were trapped underneath the dump truck, and they could not get out," he said.

A local hospital was "overwhelmed with the victims," including 26 people who were admitted for treatment, mostly with broken bones, Dr. Ratna Yuniarti said. Two were in critical condition, she said.

At least three children were killed and an unknown number hurt, Yuniarti said.

A police officer, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media, said that company employees first arrived on the scene because the complex was just yards (meters) away. The closest district police station was 25 miles (40 kilometres) away.

Some survivors claimed the company's slow rescue efforts had caused many of the deaths.

Cornelis, a company official who uses a single name, acknowledged the slow response and said it was difficult to mobilize employees, many of whom were asleep at 9 p.m. when the accident occurred. Employees live at the complex.

"Many victims were trapped in a three-meter- (10-foot-) wide swamp while others were underneath the truck for hours," Cornelis was quoted as saying by Antara.

Safety standards are poor in Indonesia, a vast archipelagic nation of 235 million. Road, train, boat and air accidents claim hundreds of lives each year.

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