Smoke & Carbon Monoxide Alarm Talking Points

You can use these talking points in preparation for a media interview. More media interview tips are available in our Pocket Media Guide.

Smoke alarms

- Smoke alarms save lives — but only if they work.
- While we cannot say at this point if this home had working smoke alarms, we encourage residents to be sure they have working smoke alarms and to test them monthly.
- For best protection, we recommend residents have interconnected smoke alarms on each level of the home — including the basement — and in every bedroom. Interconnected alarms all sound if one detects smoke. This will give everyone in the home more immediate warning and the most time to escape.
- There are many different features available in smoke alarms. If you need assistance in choosing one for your home, call the fire department at [RECITE YOUR DEPARTMENT'S PHONE NUMBER].
- Are your smoke alarms starting to look more yellow than white? Not sure what year they were installed? Check the date on the back of the alarm. If it is more than 10 years old, it's time to buy a replacement. After 10 years the sensor in the alarm may malfunction.
- Make sure your children are familiar with the sound of the smoke alarm and that they know to exit the home when it sounds.
- Everyone in the home needs to know the difference between the low-battery-warning "chirp" and the actual three-beep alarm triggered by the presence of smoke.
- Nationally, three out of five fire deaths occur in homes without working smoke alarms.
- Working smoke alarms cut in half your risk of dying in a residential fire.

Carbon monoxide alarms

- Carbon monoxide (CO) is an odorless, colorless, invisible gas produced by incomplete combustion. Possible sources of carbon monoxide in the home include your furnace, water heater or gas range.
- Residents should have a CO alarm within 10 feet of any sleeping area as well as on each level of the home.
- We recommend that the CO alarm has a digital readout and that it is placed in a location that can be seen so you're aware if there are any increases in CO levels in the home.
- Replace CO alarms every seven years or according to the manufacturer's recommendation.
- Symptoms of CO poisoning include headache, weakness, dizziness, nausea, and shortness of breath.
- If your CO alarm sounds, get outside to fresh air and call the fire department.
- Change the batteries in your CO alarm annually.
- Test your CO alarms once a month along with your smoke alarms.
- Carbon monoxide alarms can be mounted low since many are plug-in with a battery back-up. Be sure to follow manufacturer's recommendations.
- Investigating or looking for the source of CO wastes valuable time and can put you at risk.