Working with the Media Template

# PURPOSE

*These are sample statements to use if members of the media call before a press release is issued. Getting the facts correct is a priority. Do not give information to the media before confirming facts with field staff, the emergency operations center, and management. Changing information after it is released can lead to media confusion and loss of focus on the key messages.*

# DIRECTIONS

*Review these statements and adapt them with specific information about the water system. Incorporate the template into your standard operating procedures (SOPs) and emergency response plans (ERPs). Add specific information during an advisory. Rehearse the responses prior to speaking with media.*

*Insert information about a specific event in the brackets. See the following examples. Adapt it as needed.*

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Pre-scripted Immediate Responses to Media Inquiries

Use this template if the media is “at your door” and you need time to assemble the facts for the initial press release statement.

Getting the facts is a priority. It is important that your organization not give in to pressure to confirm or release information before you have confirmation (e.g., from your scientists and emergency operations center).

The following responses give you the necessary time to collect the facts. Use the **Basic Elements of a Spokesperson Statement** (See: **Tools and Templates: During an Event** ) to provide an initial press release statement after the facts are gathered.

NOTE: Get authorization BEFORE releasing information.

Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Time:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Working with the Media Template, cont’d

Pre-scripted Responses

## If on the phone to the media:

* “We’ve just learned about the [situation, incident, event] and are trying to get more complete information now. How can I reach you when I have more information?”
* “All our efforts are directed at [bringing the situation under control]. I’m not going to speculate about [the situation]. How can I reach you when I have more information?”
* “I’m not the authority on this subject. Let me have [name] call you right back.”
* “We’re preparing a statement now. Can I get back to you in about [number of minutes or hours]?”
* “You may check our website for background information, and I will fax/e-mail you with the time of our next update.”

## If in person at the incident site or in front of a press meeting:

“This is an evolving [situation, incident, event], and I know you want as much information as possible right now. While we work to get your questions answered, I want to tell you what we can confirm right now:

* At approximately [time], a [brief description of what happened].
* At this point, we do not know [how long the advisory will last, how many customers are affected, etc.].
* We have a [system, plan, procedure, operation] in place. We are being assisted by [local public health officials, emergency response officials] as part of that plan.
* The situation is [under, not yet under] control. We are working with [local, state, federal] authorities to [correct this situation, determine how this happened].
* We will continue to gather information and release it to you as soon as possible. I will be back to you within [amount of time in minutes or hours] to give you an update. As soon as we have confirmed information, it will be provided.
* We ask for your patience as we respond to this [situation, incident, event].”