



Press Conference Guide

When Should a Fire Department Hold a Press Conference?

Almost Never

But as the Fire Department we have an obligation to inform the media and the public of up-to-date and timely information relative to major fire related incidents and disasters, especially if the events may impact the community.

You should hold a press conference only when you have major breaking news. Nothing is worse than holding a press conference and having no press show up. This happens more often than you think! The working press is very competitive, and would almost always rather have the opportunity to ask questions in a private interview rather than at a press conference with everybody else.

Press conferences should be used when it is not possible or practical to provide each media representative with a private interview.

Press Conferences for the Fire Department Are Appropriate When:

- Catastrophic/crisis events occur or may occur which could or will endanger the public

Planning a Press Conference

1. Prepare the announcement
2. Confirm the speaker
3. Select a time that fits

News Deadlines

- Most people get their news from TV. If TV has an 11 or 12 a.m. news program, and you want to be on that show, schedule the conference no later than 9 a.m. This is so the producer has time to shoot, edit and air the program. If TV has a 4-6 pm newscast, schedule the conference no later than 1 or 1:30 p.m. unless there is urgent, breaking news like a fire or plane crash.
- Print deadlines tend to be in the late afternoon for the next day unless there is urgent, breaking news, as in a crisis.

News Cycle

- If you want your planned announcement to have the maximum impact and the biggest audience, have it during the week. Thursday is best. If you want the least impact, have it on Friday afternoon too late for the evening news. Even better, have it on Friday afternoon on a holiday weekend, as the most number of people will be away from newspapers and news programs.

4. Make an invitation list - invite reporters who cover the type of news you are announcing
5. Select a location that is easily accessible for media - be sure there is handicapped access
6. Arrange for parking - remember press people are on deadline and need to get in and out quickly
7. Arrange press seating - print and radio in front, then photographers without tripods, then photographers with tripods.
8. Make sure all press and all photographers can have a clear view of speaker
9. Position company logo behind speaker or on front of podium so it will be included in photos, if desired
10. Arrange for and pre-test sound system