

## Press Releases

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A press release notifies the media about something newsworthy, like an important topic or event. You might use a press release to share new findings, announce a public health advisory, promote a new resource, or invite people to a public meeting.





For Immediate Release: Month Day, 4-Digit Year  
Media Inquiries: [envhealthmedia@cdc.gov](mailto:envhealthmedia@cdc.gov) or 770-488-0700

### ATSDR Releases Information on Drinking Water for Millsboro, DE

ATLANTA, GA – In the health consultation released today, the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) reviewed available data to find out if coming in contact with trichloroethylene (TCE) in the Millsboro, DE, drinking water could cause adverse health effects.

A former poultry vaccine manufacturing plant was the source of the TCE. It was used within a closed refrigeration system. A release from this system led to TCE contamination in the soil and eventually in the shallow groundwater. TCE contaminated two of the three Millsboro water system wells between water tests in October 2004 and October 2005, possibly for as long as one year.

ATSDR estimated past exposures and possible health effects by using test results from pre-filtered municipal well water. Test results covered samples taken between October 2005 and October 2006.

-more-

If embargoed, replace with: Hold For Release Until: Month Day, 4-Digit Year.

Always include contact information.

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Your headline should capture the reader's attention. Ask yourself, "If I saw this headline, would I read the article?"

Your slug line (subtitle) can provide further description.

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Always include the location to orient the reader.

Always include the most important information in the first 2 paragraphs — and make sure it comes before information about your organization.

**Ask:** If people don't read past the second paragraph, will they still understand what the press release is about?

After the contamination was discovered, the Millsboro Water Treatment Facility installed a granulated activated carbon filtration system to remove TCE before the water enters the distribution system. Since the filters were installed, the water treatment facility has conducted weekly sampling to ensure that levels of TCE meet federal standards.

To read the health consultation, go to: [https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/HAC/pha/millsboro/millsboro%20tce\\_hc\\_final\\_02-13-13.pdf](https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/HAC/pha/millsboro/millsboro%20tce_hc_final_02-13-13.pdf)

A copy of the health consultation is also available at the Millsboro Public Library during regular business hours at the following location:

Millsboro Public Library, 217 W. State Street, Millsboro, DE 19966

For more information about the health consultation, community members can call 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636).

To learn more about TCE, visit: <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs/tf.asp?id=172&tid=30>.

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ATSDR, a federal public health agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, evaluates the human health effects of exposure to hazardous substances.

→ Provide relevant links to consumer content.  
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→ If appropriate, provide contact information for the public.  
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→ 3 pound signs mark the end of the press release.  
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→ Always include “About Us” language.

## More tips for writing a press release

- » Keep paragraphs brief (no more than 5 sentences). Use audience-appropriate plain language.
- » Make it easy for the journalist to write a story. If possible, include quotes from experts.
- » Your press release should read like a news article, not a scientific article or marketing piece.
- » Make sure there's enough white space. If you can't fit it into 2 pages, you're probably saying too much. A journalist can always contact you if they need more information.
- » When you read each sentence in your first draft, ask yourself, "Is this newsworthy?"
- » Only send a press release when you really have something important to say. If you send too many, journalists may get overwhelmed and ignore them.



## Checklist

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### Branding

- Includes your organization's logo
- Uses your organization's fonts and color palette

### Layout

- Has sufficient white space (isn't overwhelming to the eye)
- Has at least 1-inch margins
- Includes a full space between paragraphs
- Body ends with "###"
- Includes "About Us" language after the "###"
- Font size is 12 point or larger

### Heading

- Includes "For Immediate Release:" or "Hold For Release Until:"
- Has correct date for release
- Heading grabs your reader's attention
- Heading is jargon-free
- Slug line (subtitle) enhances understanding of the heading
- Slug line is in italics

## Content


- First sentence grabs your reader's attention
- First paragraph does **not** describe your organization and its mission
- Most important information is in the first 2 paragraphs
- Language is simple and clear
- Acronyms are defined
- Challenging words are defined in plain language
- Reads like a news article (not a scientific article or marketing piece)
- Includes facts, quotes, and numbers where appropriate
- Includes links to relevant consumer resources
- Is at least 2 paragraphs long
- Is no longer than 2 pages
- Sentences are brief (ideally no more than 20 words)
- Paragraphs are brief (no more than 5 sentences)

## Contact Information

- Includes contact information (e.g., phone, email, website)
- Provides the name of an actual person if possible

# Media Advisories

A media advisory is a time-sensitive, 1-page document that alerts the press to an upcoming event. It's always titled "Media Advisory."



**Media Advisory**  
 For Immediate Release: Month Day, 4-Digit Year  
 Media Inquiries: [envhealthmedia@cdc.gov](mailto:envhealthmedia@cdc.gov) or 770-488-0700

**ATSDR Information Session on Rare, Local Illness**  
 Agency Will Provide Updates on Polycythemia Vera  
 Research in Eastern Pennsylvania

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry will update the community on its research into polycythemia vera (PV), a rare illness found in the tri-county area of Schuylkill, Luzerne, and Carbon Counties, PA, that causes the body to make too many red blood cells.

WHO: Lora Werner, Regional Director, ATSDR, and Elizabeth Irvin-Barnwell, Epidemiologist, ATSDR

WHEN: Thursday, September 20, 2012. Experts will present updates at 6 p.m. and 7 p.m., with an opportunity for questions.

Always include a date at the top of the advisory.

Use a short, clear headline explaining the event. Avoid jargon. Use action-oriented copy that will make a journalist want to attend.

Include a slug line (subtitle) that enhances the reader's understanding of the headline.

The first paragraph is short and provides the "what." Write in future tense — the event hasn't happened yet.

WHERE: Tamaqua Public Library, 30 South Railroad Street. For directions to the library, visit [www.taplpa.info/?page-directions](http://www.taplpa.info/?page-directions).

WHY: In 2008, an ATSDR investigation identified a cluster of PV cases in Eastern Pennsylvania. ATSDR is currently conducting 14 research projects and four non-research projects to look at any potential causes of the cluster. The projects are based on four focus areas: epidemiology, genetics, toxicology, and environmental analysis. Some of the research projects are evaluating risk factors associated with the development of PV, essential thrombocytosis (ET), and primary myelofibrosis (PMF) in the tri-county area.

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ATSDR, a federal public health agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, evaluates the potential for adverse human health effects of exposure to hazardous substances in the environment.

→ The “why” should convince the reporter to attend. Use your best storytelling skills here.

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→ 3 pound signs mark the end of the press release.

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→ Always include “About Us” language.





## Checklist

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### Branding

- Includes your organization's logo
- Uses your organization's fonts and color palette

### Layout

- Has sufficient white space (isn't overwhelming to the eye)
- Is no longer than 1 page when possible
- Has at least 1-inch margins
- Includes a full space between paragraphs
- Body ends with "###"
- Includes "About Us" language after the "###"
- Font size is 12 point or larger

### Heading

- Includes "For Immediate Release" at the top
- Has correct date for release
- Heading grabs your reader's attention
- Heading is jargon-free
- Heading is in bold
- Slug line (subtitle) enhances understanding of the heading
- Slug line is in italics

## Content

- First sentence grabs your reader's attention
- First paragraph does **not** describe your organization and its mission
- First paragraph briefly explains the event (in other words, acts as the "what")
- Content is broken up by "who," "what," "when," "where," and "why" as appropriate
- "Why" section convinces reporters to attend the event
- Language is audience appropriate (simple and clear)
- Acronyms are defined
- Challenging words are defined in plain language
- Reads like a news article (not a scientific article or marketing piece)
- Includes any relevant time restrictions
- Includes information about public availability or times that staff are available to answer media inquiries
- Sentences are brief (ideally no more than 20 words)
- Paragraphs are brief (no more than 5 sentences)

## Contact Information

- Includes contact information (e.g., phone, email, website)
- Provides the name of an actual person if possible

## Representing Your Organization in Media Interviews

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### Tips

You may need to give media interviews in person, on the phone, or over email. Or, you may need to serve as a spokesperson in other capacities (for example, sitting on an expert panel or providing social media messaging). It's an important role. Effective media coverage will boost the visibility of your organization and inspire trust.



**Note:** Tips for giving effective media interviews may also be useful when giving presentations.

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### Before the interview

Having a solid understanding of the topic is crucial, of course. But it's not enough — you also need to go into your interview with a strategy.

Message mapping can help. It's a way of determining the information your audience really **needs**. Vincent T. Covello, PhD, Founder and Director of the Center for Risk Communication, developed the technique. He lays out 5 steps:

- 1 ) Identify the stakeholders.**  
Who will be reading or watching?  
Who's most affected by the topic you're discussing?
- 2 ) Identify their questions and concerns**  
What specific information do stakeholders want?
- 3 ) Find the underlying themes.**  
Sort through their questions and concerns and identify a few overarching concepts.
- 4 ) Develop key messages.**  
Base these messages on both the specific concerns and the underlying themes.
- 5 ) Find supporting evidence.**  
Carefully pick a few key facts that back up each message.

## Creating Effective Key Messages



- » Aim for no more than 3 key messages.
- » Keep messages brief — 9 words or fewer (or 3 seconds spoken aloud).
- » Make sure they're easy for your target audience to understand.
- » Have 3 pieces of supporting evidence for each message.

### As part of your preparation, you can also:

- » **Ask the reporter, blogger, or panel coordinator to provide questions ahead of time.** If you can't get specific questions, ask for information about the general direction of the interview
- » **Practice what you plan to say several times.** Ask a colleague to play the role of the reporter to help you practice.
- » **Create a handout for the reporter that includes your key messages.** Make sure the reporter has a copy to take with them after the interview.

## Create a Q & A to help spokespeople prepare



If you're helping a colleague get ready for an interview, press conference, or public event, create a Q&A. It's a short, internal document that will give your spokesperson confidence and help them stay on message.

- » Come up with a list of questions — what are people likely to ask?
- » Include the exact answers you want your audience to hear.
- » Make sure the answers are easy to understand (no jargon!).

## During the interview

### Set a positive tone:

- » **Relax and be yourself.** Take deep breaths to stay calm.
- » **Be friendly.** You don't want to come across as argumentative or defensive.
- » **Maintain eye contact with the person you're speaking to.** If you're being filmed, talk to the person, not the camera

### Communicate effectively:

- » **Speak slowly and clearly.** Be careful not to mumble or rush your answers.
- » **Use plain language.** Avoid using jargon that may not be familiar to your audience.
- » **Listen carefully during the interview.** Pay especially close attention to multipart questions, so you don't miss anything.
- » **If you misspeak, acknowledge the mistake.** Restate your point.
- » **If you don't know the answer to a question, say so.** Don't try to evade or bluff — just offer to follow up with an answer after the interview.

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During media interviews, there's no such thing as "off the record." Only say things you're comfortable having quoted.

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## Focus on key messages:

- » **Keep responses brief.** Try to answer questions in 10 to 15 seconds — long-winded responses can bury key points.
- » **Avoid talking to fill dead air.** Speak only when you have something on message to say.
- » **Repeat key messages.** Aim to state key messages 3 times during the interview.
- » **Avoid yes or no answers.** Instead, use a key message to explain your position.
- » **Remember that you're speaking for the agency, not yourself.** Leave your personal opinions out of the interview.



## Checklist

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### Preparation

- Request questions in advance (or general scope of questions) from the interviewer or moderator
- Clarify the target audience for the interview
- Research the interview subject matter — collect relevant facts or statistics
- Use message mapping to develop 3 clearly-defined key messages
- Find 3 pieces of supporting evidence for each key message
- Consider creating a Q&A — a list of anticipated difficult questions and appropriate answers
- Practice stating key messages
- Practice planned answers
- Prepare handout of key points for the reporter or panel moderator

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To access the Health Communication Playbook online, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/clearwriting/docs/health-comm-playbook-508.pdf>