

What to say when you brief the media



Begin with a statement. Don't let them rush you into answering questions.

Use confirmed facts only. Include the basics of what happened and what the church is doing to respond.

Keep it short and simple. Less room for them to misinterpret what you say.

Refer to policies and procedures when you can't discuss specifics. (That means you'll need to do a little research before talking to the media.)

Don't speculate. It is okay to say I don't know, but I'll check on that for you.

Speak slowly, naturally. It's OKAY to pause to think.

Make eye contact with the reporter if in person. Do NOT read from a script. If using notes, glance over them, then look up and make your statement.

If you don't understand the question, ask them to clarify. Again, it's okay to pause before answering.

Wrap up the briefing when YOU'RE ready, not when they're ready. Don't let them keep you answering questions when you've given all the information you're prepared to give at that time. Just say, "I understand you have more questions, but that's all the confirmed information we have right now. We will update you as more information becomes available. Please give me your contact information. Our office number is ____."

It's good to include a written statement recapping what you've already told them. Be sure to include in your opening statement: Your name/title, confirmed facts (Here's what we know right now...), concern/compassion, what the church is doing to help people. Relevant policies/procedures: "In a case like this, church policy is... Church law says...."

If necessary, go ahead and schedule an update briefing. You may want to email any additional information to the media instead of having another briefing. And definitely post updates on your website.