



## News from: City of Oakland

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 4, 2016

Update from the City of Oakland on the  
31<sup>st</sup> Avenue Fire at 8:00 a.m.

*[NOTE: The next media briefing will be held at 11 a.m. on Sunday, December 4, at International Boulevard and 31<sup>st</sup> Avenue]*

Personnel from the Oakland Fire Department, Oakland Police Department, Alameda County Sheriff's Office and Oakland Public Works Department continued the painstaking work of recovering the bodies from the scene of the fire.

As of 8:00 a.m., 24 victims have been located and the Alameda County Coroner's Office is in the process of identifying the victims.

Oakland Fire Department is currently working with the Alameda County Sheriff's Department, Oakland Police Department, Alcohol Tobacco and Fire, CAL OSHA, Alameda County Search and Rescue and the American Red Cross to continue the recovery effort and conduct the investigation into the cause of this deadly fire.

Personnel have created pathways through the debris, dividing the building into quadrants and removing debris by hand, bucket-by-bucket. This methodical and painstaking approach is important to respectfully remove the victims and carefully process the scene. At this time, about 20 percent of the building has been searched.

The recovery effort, hindered by the roof collapse, required a breach of the cinder block wall with heavy rescue equipment at approximately 10:00 p.m. last night. The debris removal process continued throughout the evening.

Three of the victims have been positively identified and their families have been notified. Out of respect for the families, these names will not be released until later today.

The devastation of the scene has impacted the recovery personnel. The City has counseling services on-site to assist first responders and support teams.

The Family Assistance Center, established by the Alameda County Coroner's Bureau in coordination with the American Red Cross, continues to operate at 2425 E. 12<sup>th</sup> Street. Family members and friends looking to locate loved ones may go to the center. Grief counseling and resources are available to families affected by this tragedy. We are requesting that only families and loved ones go to the Family Assistance Center and ask that the media respect the privacy of families at this time.

The public may access the latest updated information on the City's website at oaklandnet.com or at (510) 238-2181. **Please do not contact the Alameda County Coroner's Bureau unless you believe a family member may be a victim of the fire.**

In the coming days, after the recovery phase is completed, our focus will shift to a

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thorough investigation of what occurred. We are committed to bringing every resource to bear to determine what happened here and how such a tragic event could have occurred. Our priority is to bring closure to this tragedy for the victims' families.

### **Background**

A three-alarm fire broke out on Friday, December 2, at 11:32 p.m. at 1315 31<sup>st</sup> Avenue in Oakland. The fire has resulted in a terrible tragedy.

The badly damaged building has required shoring, and first responders have begun retrieving the deceased. The roof of the building collapsed onto the second floor which has complicated the process of recovery effort. This process will be undertaken in a methodical and thorough process in a humane and compassionate manner to ensure that the victims are recovered and identified, and to make sure their families have this information as expeditiously as possible.

The Alameda County Sheriff's Office will be managing the victim identification process and working with the Oakland Police Department to provide additional updates.

The last permitted use of the building was as a warehouse. On November 13, 2016, the City of Oakland received complaints of blight and unpermitted interior construction at the building. On November 17, 2016, a City building inspector visited the property and verified the blight complaint, but could not gain access to the building to confirm the other complaint regarding unpermitted construction. This is an ongoing investigation.

Our city has experienced a tremendous tragedy. As a community, we can come together in recovery and spirit. The Oakland A's have set up a site for donations for Oakland Fire Victims at

<https://www.youcaring.com/firevictimsfoaklandfiredec232016-706684>.

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