



City of  
**OAKLAND**  
California

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## 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 5:30 p.m.

The Alameda County Sheriff's Office Coroner's Bureau has provided the City of Oakland the names of the eight (8) victims that have been positively identified as having perished in the 31<sup>st</sup> Avenue Fire. One of the eight victims is a 17-year-old minor whose name will not be released. The victims' families have been notified.

The seven identified victims are:

Cash Askew, 22, Oakland, Calif.

David Clines, 35, Oakland, Calif.

Nick Gomez-Hall, 25, Coronado, Calif.

Sara Hoda, 30, Walnut Creek, Calif.

Travis Hough, 35, Oakland, Calif.

Donna Kellogg, 32, Oakland, Calif.

Brandon Chase Wittenauer, 32, Hayward, Calif.

The City of Oakland extends condolences to the families who have received the dreadful news that one of their loved ones perished in the fire.

The focus of our efforts remains the recovery of victims. To ensure the safety of the first responders, more shoring has been placed to secure the collapsed sections of the building. This will allow first responders to safely proceed with the recovery process. 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. At this time, about 30 percent of the building has been searched.

Oakland Fire Department continues to work 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.

The Alameda County District Attorney's Office has activated the criminal investigation teams and is actively looking at this with all of the other law enforcement partners.

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 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 had begun retrieving the deceased. The roof of the building collapsed onto the second floor which has complicated the process of recovery effort. This recovery 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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