

Report calls for bigger Pentagon role in disasters

Document lists Katrina lessons

By Ashley M. Heher
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON

A White House assessment of the sluggish federal reaction to Hurricane Katrina concludes the Pentagon should oversee future catastrophe responses but does not recommend that Homeland

Security Secretary Michael Chertoff be fired, officials said Wednesday.

The beleaguered Federal Emergency Management Agency would remain at the Homeland Security Department under a "lessons learned" White House review to be released today, according to one official.

Though some agencies, like the



BUSH

Coast Guard, successfully rescued tens of thousands of storm victims, "there are other areas where all levels of government fell short — the federal, the state and the local," White House spokesman Scott McClellan told reporters.

"What we want to do is take a close look at what worked and what didn't work and apply those lessons to the future," he said.

The report, by White House homeland security adviser Frances Fragos Townsend, was expected to be less scathing than a House review issued last week.

The House review blamed all

levels of government for indifference toward disaster preparations that contributed to deaths and suffering in Katrina's aftermath.

Bush, who ordered the White House report, has accepted responsibility for the government's halting response to the Aug. 29 storm.

That study also found that earlier involvement by President Bush could have spurred a faster response.

The hurricane killed 1,300 people and forced hundreds of thousands of Gulf Coast residents to abandon their damaged or destroyed homes.

Public not confident about readiness

A new Associated Press-Ipsos Public Affairs poll has found that public confidence in government disaster readiness is lower today, six months after Katrina struck, than it was in early September 2005, when images of rooftop-stranded storm victims were fresh in the nation's mind.

Slightly less than half of those polled, 47 percent, said they were very or somewhat confident in the govern-

ment's preparedness, down from 56 percent in the days after the storm and 54 percent in mid-September.

And just one in three Americans is confident the money set aside for Katrina recovery efforts, an expected \$100 billion, is being spent wisely, down from half in mid-September, the poll found.

Nearly three in four Republicans, 70 percent, said they were confident in the government's readiness. Almost the same proportion of Democrats, 72 percent, said they were not confident.

— The Associated Press

Panel suggests flu shot for kids

Committee urges wider vaccinations

By Mike Strobbe
The Associated Press

ATLANTA

Children ages 2 to 5 should get flu shots, an advisory panel said Wednesday, widening the group of Americans urged to seek protection from a virus that kills thousands in this country each year.

The recommendation, which covers 5.3 million healthy U.S. children, was unanimously approved by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices. The panel's advice is routinely adopted by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which issues vaccination guidelines to doctors and hospitals.

Flu shots are already recommended for children ages 6 months to 23 months, pregnant women, people 65 and older, and people of all ages with chronic health conditions, along with a few other groups.

The new recommendation was cheered by Alissa Kanowitz of New York City, the mother of a 4-year-old girl who died from the flu in 2004.

"It's too late for us to do anything for Amanda now. But hopefully this will help other children," said Kanowitz, 37, member of a group called Families Fighting Flu who spoke to the committee before the vote.

The committee also recommended routine vaccinations for in-home and out-of-home caregivers of children ages 2 to 5.

The panel considered encouraging all Americans to routinely get flu shots. However, committee members narrowly defeated the proposal, saying more study and planning are needed.

Research data shows the flu virus can put children with certain risky health conditions at grave risk of death or hospitalization. But scientists have debated how dangerous the flu is to healthy children older than 2, and how effectively vaccination prevents flu and flu-like illnesses in such children.

Typically the committee looks for evidence that such a measure would reduce deaths and hospitalizations. But in this case, they gave heavy consideration for reducing visits to doctor's offices and emergency rooms.

Wednesday's decision marks "a paradigm shift" in how the committee makes vaccination recommendations, in that the panel is focusing not only on how vaccination helps individuals, but also how it helps society by blocking the spread of infectious disease, said Dr. William Schaffner, a Vanderbilt University preventive medicine expert.

'She's going to be happy for the rest of her life'



The eight winners of the \$365 million Nebraska Powerball lottery hold their ceremonial checks at a news conference in Lincoln, Neb., on Wednesday. All the winners worked at a meat processing plant. Each will receive about \$15.5 million after taxes.

Eight Nebraska meatpackers carve up \$365M jackpot

By Kevin O'Hanlon
The Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb.

Eight workers at a Nebraska meatpacking plant are really bringing home the bacon now: They stepped forward Wednesday to claim the biggest lottery jackpot in U.S. history: \$365 million.

The seven men and one woman bought the winning Powerball ticket at a convenience store near the ConAgra ham processing plant where they worked.

At least three of the winners are immigrants, two from Vietnam and one from the Republic of Congo.

"This is great country!" said Quang Dao, 56, who came to the United States in 1988. He still has family in Vietnam and said he plans to help them financially with his winnings.

The previous U.S. jackpot record was \$363 million, won by two ticketholders in Illinois and Michigan in 2000.

The Nebraska workers had the option of taking the money in one lump sum or 30 annual installments. They chose the lump sum and will get \$15.5 million each after taxes.

Three of the group quit their jobs when they hit the jackpot.

"I've been retired for about four days now," said Eric Zornes, 40.

Alain Maboussou, 26, said he fled the Congo in 1999 to escape unrest after the

Bringing home the bacon

Eight workers at a Nebraska meatpacking plant won the biggest lottery prize in U.S. history. Each gets about \$15.5 million after taxes.

Top five lottery jackpots in U.S.

| DATE | JACKPOT IN MILLIONS | GAME | STATE* |
|-----------|---------------------|---------------|------------|
| Feb. 2006 | \$365.0 | Powerball | Neb. |
| May 2000 | \$363.0 | Big Game | Ill./Mich. |
| Oct. 2004 | \$340.0 | Powerball | Ore. |
| Nov. 2005 | \$315.0 | Mega Millions | Calif. |
| Dec. 2002 | \$314.9 | Powerball | W.Va. |

* Where ticket was sold

SOURCE: North American Association of State and Provincial Lotteries

AP PHOTOS

civil war there. He said he plans to quit work and return to school for a degree in business administration. The money will provide for his wife and baby daughter.

"She's going to be happy for the rest of her life," he said of the 3-month-old girl.

Mike Terpstra, a 47-year-old plant supervisor who is single and has no children, was unsure what to do with the money.

"Everybody has dreams," he said. "Buy an island. Buy an airplane. In reality, I'm not a fan of flying and don't really like water."

The winners said they often pooled their money with other workers when Powerball jackpots exceeded \$40 million.

Maboussou said he did not think employees who did not chip in for the tickets would harbor any ill will toward the winners.

"I don't think they have a reason to be jealous because when it's a pool day, we ask people to put like in five bucks, so if you wasn't there or you didn't put five bucks in, sorry," he said.

The other winners were: David Gehle, 53; Chasity Rutjens, 29; Dung Tran, 34; and Robert Stewart, 30.

The winning numbers were 15, 17, 43, 44 and 48, with a Powerball number of 29. The odds of picking the winning combination of numbers were 1 in 146 million.

Powerball tickets are sold in 28 states, the District of Columbia and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Abortion proposal language softened

Mention of fetal pain dropped from bill

By Deanna Martin
The Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS

A Senate committee stripped key provisions from an abortion bill Wednesday, making the legislation more palatable to abortion rights groups by eliminating language regarding when life begins and fetal pain.

Originally, the bill would have informed women seeking an abortion that life begins at conception and that a fetus could feel pain.

Senators voted to remove those provisions, instead requiring women to be informed that many families are waiting to adopt children if they choose to carry their pregnancy to term.

Republican Sen. Patricia Miller, who heads the Senate Health and Provider Services Committee, said she believes that life begins at conception and that she opposes abortion. However, she said the changes were needed because of conflicting medical testimony over the bill.

Miller said she might try to revive some of the bill's original provisions later in the session. Senators also changed another bill that would have required abortion clinics to meet new physical building standards, which some said would have forced the state's nine clinics to shut down. The revised bill removes the specific standards, instead saying clinics should be safe and well maintained.

The committee passed both amended bills 11-0. They now move to the Senate for consideration and can be further changed as they continue to move through the General Assembly.

Betty Cocrum, president and CEO of Planned Parenthood of Indiana, said Wednesday's compromises made both bills more tolerable to her organization.

"This certainly is a more favorable place than we were in a week ago," Cocrum said.

The Senate committee also briefly considered several amendments that would have allowed pharmacists to opt out of filling certain prescriptions if it went against their conscience. However, the committee did not vote on those amendments.

"This certainly is a more favorable place than we were in a week ago."

Betty Cocrum
president, CEO of Planned Parenthood

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