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Next time, evacuees subject to criminal checks

■ State's plan calls for putting some offenders on separate bus

By TERRI LANGFORD
HOUSTON CHRONICLE

Texans seeking to escape the next hurricane or state emergency by evacuation bus will first be submitted to criminal background checks, the state's emergency management director says.

The idea, according to Jack Colley, is to keep sex offenders and others who may be wanted by police off the same buses used by the most vulnerable during an evacuation: the elderly, disabled residents and children.

"This will allow us to help them evacuate," Colley said of sex offenders and others wanted for crimes. "We're not going to leave anyone."

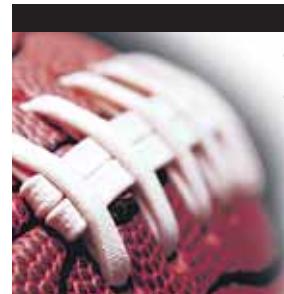
Though the intent is to make sure vulnerable evacuees aren't victimized, Colley acknowledged that culling sex offenders and other criminals from a herd of evacuees during a potentially chaotic evacuation comes with plenty of challenges.

"We'll be able to do it," he said of the task, declining to be more specific about the process because of safety concerns.

He said the agency's first concern is to move people out of harm's way.

But Colley insists a better filter on who gets on an evacuation bus with special needs residents will eliminate

Please see CHECKS, Page A12



SPORTS

High school football playoffs

■ Friday's game: Austin Lake Travis 49, Dayton 13.

■ Today:

NORTH SHORE vs. CONVERSE JUDSON	KATY vs. SAN ANTONIO MADISON	LAMAR CONSOLIDATED vs. COPPERAS COVE
3 P.M.	1:30 P.M.	7 P.M.

Astros snare a closer in four-player deal



VALVERDE

The Astros acquired 2007 major league saves leader Jose Valverde from Arizona, sending pitchers Chad Qualls and Juan Gutierrez and infielder Chris Burke to the D-Backs. STORY ON PAGE C1



BURKE

GUTIERREZ

QUALLS

FAKE FLAKES, REAL CHILL

Winter comes calling



SHARON STEINMANN : CHRONICLE

ALMOST WITHIN REACH: Zachary Bent, 3, of Houston, tries to catch artificial snowflakes as he skates at The Galleria on Friday. Despite lower temperatures and rain this weekend, real snowflakes are unlikely in the Houston area.

Put an extra log on your fire, but don't expect any white stuff to fall

By ERIC BERGER
HOUSTON CHRONICLE

IT'S beginning to feel more like Christmas.

After a cold front blows through Houston early this morning, temperatures are expected to steadily drop throughout the day to lows

near freezing tonight and Sunday.

"It's a pretty good shot of cold air," said Patrick Blood, a forecaster with the Houston/Galveston office of the National Weather Service. "People will forget about the early 80s we had this week." Winds will make it feel even

colder. Sustained winds of about 20 mph are expected through much of the day, with gusts as high as 40 mph near the Gulf coast and higher offshore.

Winds should slacken off by Sunday morning, but not before wind chill values fall below 30 degrees in the early morning hours.

Areas north of Houston could see freezing temperatures tonight and also Please see COLD, Page A20

chron.com

EXTRA: For up-to-the-minute weather forecasts and conditions go to weather.chron.com/us/tx/houston

FRANCES MENDIETA, coordinator of a children's shelter run by Catholic Charities, is profiled on Day 2 of the Chronicle's 12-part series on those who demonstrate exceptional kindness. STORY ON PAGE F1

MUSIC

Recycle holidays

Turn those pretty greeting cards into ornaments, boxes or gift tags. PAGE E1



BUSINESS

Booming baby business

Texas Children's Hospital is buying a private obstetrics and gynecology practice. PAGE D1

McLANE: NO IDEA TEJADA WAS ON LIST

■ Astros owner 'disappointed' by shortstop's link to growth hormone

By BRIAN McTAGGART
HOUSTON CHRONICLE

Astros owner Drayton McLane admitted Friday he was disappointed when he learned newly acquired shortstop Miguel Tejada's name appeared in the Mitchell Report, but he stood by the club's decision to deal for the four-time All-Star.

Tejada, obtained by the Astros from the Baltimore Orioles in a six-player trade Wednesday, was one of 80 current or former players named in the 409-page report by former Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell on the use of performance-enhancing drugs in baseball.

The report shows evidence that Tejada purchased human growth hormone through a former teammate. Former Astros pitchers Andy Pettitte and Roger Clemens also were named in the report.

"I was certainly disappointed," McLane said of Tejada. "We certainly did not (anticipate it). In my 15 years of baseball, I've never seen anything that no one had any idea of anything that was there."

"None of the owners had any knowledge. It was a surprise. We knew there was a problem. I'm disappointed, but we then need to sit down and understand with each player what responsibility we have to see how this can be solved."

On if he would have made the Miguel Tejada trade had he known Tejada was in the report: "I don't think that's a fair question. If we knew, certainly we would have looked at it totally different. We didn't have any of that knowledge at that time."

On if the Astros would still honor Roger Clemens' personal services contract: "Boy, that is way too early to determine that. That was to go into effect when he retired, and he has not made that decision to my knowledge."



JOHNNY HANSON : CHRONICLE

McLANE RESPONDS:

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HANDOUT PHOTO
RON WHO?: Supporters have raised \$236,000 to fly a blimp, which took off Friday from North Carolina, to help answer that question.

Paul campaign balloons as cash keeps rolling in

■ GOP hopeful is hanging tough with top-tier foes

By BENNETT ROTH
WASHINGTON BUREAU

FOCUS ON HUCKABEE

■ The ethics questions faced by Mike Huckabee as Arkansas' governor become political fodder. PAGE A23

crosses the country on private charter jets. And avid supporters have even rented a blimp to spread the word about the "Ron Paul Revolution."

Once considered a minor candidate in a large field of candidates, Paul is now close to breaking a \$12 million fund-raising goal for the final quarter of the year as his volunteers stage an Internet money-raising event Sunday tied to the anniversary of the 1773

Please see PAUL, Page A12

WASHINGTON — Ron Paul, the GOP presidential contender from Lake Jackson, used to be a low-budget kind of guy, flying commercially to reach campaign stops and buying campaign supplies at Sam's Club.

But now, flush with cash from an impressive online fundraising operation, the maverick Paul has upgraded his operation. He now criss-

