

OVERCAST
Mostly cloudy today with highs in the 30s; partly cloudy tonight.
Forecast, F8

The Providence Journal

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FRIDAY
DECEMBER 21, 2007

50¢
\$2.40 per week by carrier

Fire protection comes at a high price in Rhode Island

On a per capita basis, payrolls alone here outstrip the total cost of operating entire departments in most other states.

BY PAUL EDWARD PARKER
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

Nearly every other state in the nation pays less per resident to run its fire departments — personnel, buildings, equipment and other costs — than Rhode Island shelled out last year in fire department payrolls alone.

The Rhode Island fire department payrolls would rank the state third nationally when compared with the total costs in other states, a Providence Journal analysis of municipal employee payroll information shows.

The Ocean State's city and town fire departments — but not independent fire districts — paid \$158 million to their em-

ployees last year, according to information supplied by cities and towns in response to a public records request from The Journal. That does not include millions more spent on fringe benefits. The \$158-million payroll works out to \$150.55 for every man, woman and child in Rhode Island, as counted by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2000.

Nationally, Americans paid \$104 per person for fire protection, according to an analysis issued last week by the Rhode Island Public Expenditure Council. The Ocean State topped RIPEC's list at \$231 a person, but those figures

SEE **PAYROLLS, A11**



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / MARY MURPHY

Providence not only has the largest number of firefighters in the state but also the highest-paid individual firefighter.

Top Ten Average Payrolls

Here are the 10 communities with the highest average gross pay last year for municipal fire service employees. Twenty-four communities reported fire service pay in response to a request from The Providence Journal. The average pay for Providence does not include a one-time, lump-sum, retroactive pay increase paid last year. With the retroactive pay, Providence's average was \$89,457.26.

MUNICIPALITY	EMPLOYEES	PAY
1 Cranston	214	77,276.11
2 Johnston	95	74,499.39
3 Narragansett	36	73,917.20
4 Warwick	219	73,508.62
5 East Providence	123	73,238.96
6 West Warwick	75	72,625.85
7 Providence	542	71,161.37
8 Smithfield	54	70,859.91
9 Newport	104	67,133.13
10 Pawtucket	153	66,284.64

Parties fail to resolve raid case

The end of mediation efforts means the trial of seven members of the Narragansett Indian tribe on various misdemeanor charges will begin next year.

BY KATIE MULVANEY
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

PROVIDENCE — Attempts to mediate a plea deal in the criminal cases stemming from the state police raid on a Narragansett Indian smoke shop collapsed yesterday, and both sides are preparing for trial early next year.

Prosecutors, lawyers for the seven Narragansetts facing charges, and Marc DeSisto, representing Governor Carcieri, met yesterday in what would be the final mediation with retired Chief Justice Joseph R. Weisberger.

"Mediation has regrettably come to an end," Craig N. Berke, court spokesman, said following the hour-long closed session that was also attended by Col. Brendan Doherty and Maj. Steven O'Donnell of the state police. The tribal members were available by phone.

SEE **TRIAL, A11**

Lynch gives OK to video blackjack

The attorney general says the addition of virtual blackjack at Twin River does not constitute a new type of gambling in the state.

BY KATHERINE GREGG
JOURNAL STATE HOUSE BUREAU

PROVIDENCE — Attorney General Patrick C. Lynch has ruled out the need for legislative or voter approval for the latest addition to the gambling menu at the Lincoln greyhound racetrack: "virtual blackjack."

The first of the electronic games in which five players sit at a table signaling their moves to a simulated — and in promotional photographs, blond and buxom — "dealer" on a video screen went in early this week at Twin River, generating nearly double the average daily income from one of

SEE **BLACKJACK, B3**

Fired over stranded students



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / MARY MURPHY

Providence Mayor David N. Cicilline, regarding last Thursday's snowstorm, says, "The responsibility rests with the mayor of the city." He thereupon dismissed Emergency Management Director Leo Messier. At right is police Capt. Hugh Clements.



Providence Emergency Management Director Leo D. Messier is fired.



JOURNAL FILES

Deputy Supt. Tomas Hanna is suspended for 30 days.

Cicilline dismisses city's emergency chief, suspends school official

"This was a system that failed," the Providence mayor says as he issues guidelines to improve the city's response to future storms.

BY LINDA BORG
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

PROVIDENCE — Promising that students will never be stranded again, Mayor David N. Cicilline yesterday fired the city's director of emergency management and suspended for 30 days the School Department's deputy superintendent of operations.

Looking upset, Cicilline took full responsibility for the complete breakdown in communications

between virtually every city department during the Dec. 13 storm, which left hundreds of young children stuck on school buses or stranded at schools well into the night, after schools closed two hours early, while their parents fretted over where they were.

"The responsibility rests with the mayor of the city," Cicilline said yesterday. "I'm kicking myself that there were over 100 schoolchildren stranded on school buses."

According to the mayor, none of his top administrators — the police chief, the fire chief, the school

SEE **STRANDED, A2**

To ensure students get home:

- The Emergency Operations Cabinet will be automatically activated whenever schoolchildren are being bused during extreme weather and dangerous driving conditions.
- First Student will improve the ability of bus drivers or monitors to communicate directly with the bus yard.
- School Supt. Donnie Evans will establish a communications plan that requires parents to be called every hour when there are substantial bus delays.
- Evans will immediately establish a dedicated hot line to answer parents' questions during a storm and the hot line will be adequately staffed so parents will not be kept on hold.
- The School Department will bus the youngest children home first during weather emergencies.

Fired state official gives his side of the story

BY AMANDA MILKOVITS
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

SOUTH KINGSTOWN — Robert J. Warren, the fired executive director of the Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency, said Wednesday that he was being used as a "scapegoat" for the widespread problems in the response to last Thursday's storm.

Warren defended his actions during the storm. No municipalities or state agencies requested the

state EMA's help, Warren said, including Providence, where gridlock was the worst and more than 100 schoolchildren were stranded for hours on school buses. He said that without the governor's declaration of an emergency, his agency cannot force the municipalities to accept help.

With Governor Carcieri out of the country, Maj. Gen. Robert T. Bray, head of the state National Guard, was in charge. Bray, whom

Carcieri has made head of the state EMA for now, had called out sick the day of the storm, which was not revealed until Wednesday. When Bray was asked Tuesday about where he was during the storm, the general said, "I was in an advisory role."

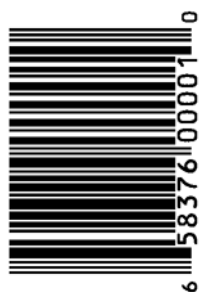
On Wednesday, in a three-hour interview at his South Kingstown home, Warren said his firing was a

SEE **WARREN, A2**



JOURNAL FILE

"No one told us it was gridlock in the city," says fired EMA director Robert J. Warren.



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SISTER ACT

Talk about teachable moments: The trials and tribulations of Britney Spears and now the pregnancy of her 16-year-old sister, Jamie Lynn, left, are sparking conversations between parents and children about adolescent sex and pregnancy as well as celebrity culture. **A8**

HELP FOR HOMEOWNERS

Five banks create a \$125-million fund to refinance mortgage loans for New England borrowers who are keeping up with monthly payments but face interest-rate increases that could eventually put them at risk of losing their houses. **F1**

WINNING BID

Developer Nicholas E. Cambio and a Florida-based investment consortium win an auction to purchase an 83-acre section of the former Rocky Point Amusement Park with a bid of \$17.1 million. **B1**