

FEMA red-faced over staged news conference

by UPI

WASHINGTON -- The U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency issued an apology for staging a Washington news conference in which actual reporters couldn't ask questions. Monday, FEMA Administrator David Paulison contacted reporters to apologize "for the inexcusable actions and remarkably bad judgment exhibited" last Friday, The Washington Post reported. The agency only gave reporters 15 minutes notice of a news conference on its activities in Southern California, where wildfires were nearly out of control. No one showed up for the conference, although some reporters called via teleconference but were told they couldn't ask questions. The questions that were posed were asked by FEMA employees. Sheila Crowley, president of the National Low Income Housing Coalition, an advocacy group that worked on housing Hurricane Katrina evacuees and often clashed with FEMA, criticized Paulison. "It's stunning to me that Director Paulison is using his time apologizing to reporters personally," Crowley told the Post. "There are a lot of people whose lives have been turned upside down by FEMA's improvisations that should be getting calls from FEMA apologizing to them."

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