

Food stored by FEMA spoils

by UPI

WASHINGTON - Officials with the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency say millions of prepared meals stored on the Gulf Coast during the 2006 hurricane season spoiled.

The officials said as many as 6 million meals stored near potential victims ahead of last hurricane season -- which turned out to be much calmer than in 2005 -- were spoiled when the agency ran out of warehouse and refrigeration space, The Washington Post reported Friday.

FEMA officials said the meals, commercial versions of the military's Meals Ready to Eat and designed to withstand desert and jungle climates, are being scavenged for still-edible portions and the rest discarded. The ruined meals are estimated to have been worth more than \$40 million.

"We were so concerned over the failure of Katrina that we... probably bought more commodities and had on hand more than what otherwise might be the most prudent business choice," Coast Guard Vice Adm. Harvey Johnson, deputy director of FEMA, said to the Post. "Given the pressure to perform ... we didn't want to run any chance of running out."

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