

The Birmingham News

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Pakistani soldiers gather near the house where it is believed al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden lived in Abbottabad, Pakistan.

WAR ON TERROR | THE DEATH OF OSAMA BIN LADEN

White House: Bin Laden used women as 'shield'

By SCOTT WILSON and ANNE E. KORNBLUT
The Washington Post

The Obama administration presented new details Monday about the death of Osama bin Laden, portraying the spiritual leader of al-Qaida as a reclusive figure who had lived in relative luxury and whose final moments had finally exposed his cowardice.

As Americans solemnly remembered those killed at bin Laden's command, senior administration officials sought to

turn their tactical military victory into a moral one by undermining the heroic image he had long cultivated among his followers. They stressed that he had been discovered not in a remote cave, but in a mansion in a wealthy Pakistani city. They also suggested that, as he tried to escape U.S. Special Operations forces, he may have used one of his wives as a "shield."

"Here is bin Laden, who has been calling for these attacks, living in this

INSIDE

- ▶ Americans feel both joy and fear over bin Laden's death / 6A
- ▶ Muslim-American leaders hope for a new chapter for Muslims / 6A
- ▶ Bin Laden's luxury hideout raises questions / 7A

See BIN LADEN | Page 7A

ALABAMA TORNADES ↻ THE RECOVERY

23 tornadoes counted

Deadliest day of US twisters since 1925

By JEREMY GRAY
News staff writer

As National Weather Service teams today continue to survey the damage from last week's storms, the number of confirmed tornadoes climbed Monday to 23 statewide.

Government analysts said Monday there were 362 tornadoes nationwide during last week's outbreak, including a record-setting 312 in one 24-hour period.

According to The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, between 8 a.m. Wednesday and the same time Thursday, 340 people were killed in the storms.

That makes April 27, 2011, the deadliest single day for tornadoes since the March 18, 1925, tornado outbreak that left 747 dead in seven states.

In Alabama, the official death toll Monday was 236 people killed in the storms, according to the state Emergency Management Agency. Another 2,219 people were injured. Spokeswoman Yasamie August said the state agency was double-checking fatality reports from its county emergency management directors.

As the share of Alabama that came under federal disaster area declaration broadened to 36 counties Monday, Gov. Robert Bentley planned to address the tornado damage during a joint session of the Legislature tonight at 6 p.m.

Charities, businesses and individuals continued to reach out Monday to help provide for those who had lost everything in the storms. Among visitors to the area was controversial actor Charlie Sheen, who toured Tuscaloosa to survey the damage and drum up help for storm victims.

The storms that swept across the state and the south Wednesday included an EF-5 twister, the strongest of tornadoes, which killed at least 26 people when 200 mph winds swept across 132 miles, from Marion County into Tennessee.

See TORNADO | Page 4A



NEWS STAFF/JEFF ROBERTS

Signs of encouragement have been posted in yards in the Concord area as clean up in that hard-hit area continued.

INSIDE

Tracking the tornadoes: How strong were they? | 4A

Scammers target storm victims

▶ 6 ways to protect yourself | 1B

Looters posed as helpers, police say

▶ 4 Floridians arrested | 2C

Sheen surveys Tuscaloosa damage

▶ Pledges aid with celebrity baseball | 2A

Store-style relief for survivors

▶ Salvation Army stocks warehouse | 1B

PLUS

▶ How give help and get help / 2C

▶ Where to file an insurance claim / 2C

Families grieve as they bury the dead

By VAL WALTON
News staff writer

PELL CITY — Sandi Mitchell stood in the back of the Usrey Funeral Home on Monday, reminiscing with friends about her uncle, Ronnie Isbell, who was killed in a tornado Wednesday along with his daughter-in-law, Tammy Isbell, and granddaughter, Leah Isbell.

"He was a great guy, always laughing, always doing something for someone else," she said.

Mitchell paused for a moment. She



NEWS STAFF/JOE SONGER

Mourners gather Monday at the Ragland United Methodist Church cemetery, where tornado victims Ronnie Isbell, Tammy Isbell and Leah Isbell were buried.

caught a glimpse of pallbearers removing their caskets from inside the funeral home for burial at Ragland United Methodist Church cemetery.

"There they go," she said, tears in her eyes. "This has been so tough. You just can't describe it."

Across Alabama, coroners have

worked to identify many of the 236 victims killed Wednesday when tornadoes tore through the state and have begun the process of releasing their bodies so their families can lay them to rest.

See FUNERALS | Page 5A

Officials warn of work site dangers

Older homes may have toxic debris

By THOMAS SPENCER
News staff writer

Jefferson County officials are patrolling tornado-ravaged areas, trying to notify residents of safety measures to keep last week's natural disaster from being compounded with damage to the environment or hazards created by inadequate fixes to damaged buildings.

The Jefferson County Department of Health is warning residents and volunteers that older homes may contain asbestos in siding, shingles and insulation, which can be harmful if the material is crushed and the fibers become airborne. Additionally, building materials both in older homes and new construction can be coated with chemicals and should not be burned.

"You would certainly want to be very cautious," said David Wootton, of the department's Bureau of Environmental Health.

Municipal and county work crews already are out beginning to remove debris that has been pushed to the curb, and jurisdictions are making arrangements for handling months of intensive removal.

As a general guideline, vegetation and tree debris should be moved to the street and piled separately from home debris. Homeowners also should keep potentially toxic chemicals in a third pile.

Open burning is prohibited in Jefferson County and tree waste should be hauled away. The county may allow open burning by permit in selective circumstances, but under no circumstances should building debris be burned.

The health department recommends that debris suspected or known to contain asbestos be handled and disposed of by a

See HEALTH | Page 5A

INDEX	Business 1B	LifeStyle 6C
	Careers 3B	Local News 1C
	Classified 6D	Movies 7C
	Comics 8C	Scene & Heard 2A
	Deaths 4C	Sports 1D
	Editorials 8A	Television 7C

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