

## Letters to governor Perry signal support for prayer in schools

AUSTIN (AP) — Before Gov. Rick Perry took up the cause of school prayer, the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11 renewed many Texans' interest in re-establishing prayer in public schools, letters to Perry's office indicate.

"I feel it is sad when the president calls for a National Day of Prayer and Americans are not allowed to pray in school," said one typical email sent to Perry on Sept. 19, a few days after President George W. Bush attended a multifaith prayer service in Washington.

One letter noted the "very troubled time." Another asked, "What would the world think if one state stood up, held its head high and told all that we will pray at our schools?"

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## Blood pressure risk

A study by researchers in Boston shows that people with high-normal blood pressure — the level just below hypertension — are at greater risk to suffer a heart attack, stroke or heart failure.

### Americans with high-normal blood pressure

19% of Americans have high-normal blood pressure

The pulse of life  
Blood pressure is measured in millimeters of mercury (mm Hg), is represented by two numbers. Systolic, the top number, is the pressure when the heart contracts. Diastolic is the pressure of blood in the arteries when the heart relaxes between beats.

	Optimal	Normal	High-normal	Hypertension
Systolic	less than 120	less than 130	130-139	140 or higher
Diastolic	less than 80	less than 85	85-89	90 or higher

SOURCES: American Heart Association; New England Journal of Medicine

## Study: Elevated blood pressure increases risk for heart attacks

(AP) — How high is too high when it comes to blood pressure? New research suggests a reading a few points below the official benchmark for high blood pressure significantly increases the risk of heart attacks and strokes.

"The lower your blood pressure, the better off you are," said one of the researchers, Dr. Ramachandran S. Vasan of Boston University School of Medicine. "Our finding emphasizes the need for people to maintain optimal levels of blood pressure."

The study of 6,859 men and women in Thursday's New England Journal of Medicine concluded that those with so-called high-normal blood pressure are two to three times more likely to suffer a heart attack, stroke or heart failure in 10 years than those with what is considered optimal or ideal blood pressure.

About 13 percent of adults in the United States have hypertension, or high blood pressure, and 19 percent have high-normal blood pressure, Vasan said.

"Individuals with high-normal blood pressure are a large chunk of the population and physicians need to share this information with them — that there is now data to suggest they could be at increased risk," he said.

Blood pressure is the force of blood in the arteries and is measured in two numbers. The high number, systolic, is the pressure when the heart contracts. The lower number, diastolic, is the pressure between beats when the heart relaxes.

High blood pressure is above 140 over 90; high-normal is 130-139 over 85-89; normal is 120-129 over 80-84 and optimal is less than 120 over 80.

Those with high-normal blood pressure are often overweight, have high cholesterol or diabetes — all possible contributors to heart disease, Vasan said.

Current guidelines suggest diet and exercise to lower normal blood pressure, but said research is needed to determine whether more aggressive treatment, including medications, is warranted.

If studies show treatment is beneficial, the threshold for treating blood pressure medications could be lowered, said Dr. Julio A. Panza, Washington Hospital Center, who wrote an accompanying editorial.

"Depending on what studies in the future show, it may have a significant implication," Panza said.

The study funded by the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute reviewed data from the Framingham Heart Study, which has followed participants from the Boston suburb for more than half a century.

Vasan and his colleagues looked at groups of patients and excluded those with high blood pressure or heart disease. They followed the rest for 12 years to find the rate of heart attack, stroke or heart failure.

Of those with high-normal blood pressure, 4 percent of men and 8 percent of women under 65 had an incident. Older participants, 65 to 90, had a rate was 18 percent for men and 25 percent for women.

The researchers calculated that the women were about two times more likely and the men were about two times more likely to have a cardiovascular event than those with optimal blood pressure.

## At least 12 dead in factory explosion

BANGKOK, Thailand (AP) — An explosion ripped through a paint factory in eastern Thailand on Wednesday, killing at least 12 workers and injuring dozens, police said.

The explosion, which set off a fire that burned for 1.5 hours, was apparently caused by chemicals used to make paint, said police Lt. Col. Nakhairind Nuroon. He said it was not clear whether the chemicals were ignited by sparks from machinery or some kind of negligence.

Twelve workers at the GF Thailand factory in the Panthong district of Chonburi province, 44 miles southeast of Bangkok, were confirmed dead, police said.

Thirty people were admitted to hospital with minor injuries, mostly cuts from flying glass and burns, Lt. Col. Nakhairind said. Twenty of them were discharged after treatment.

## Thai factory explodes

An explosion rocked a paint factory in Pathong district of Chonburi



SOURCE: ESRI