

Washington Times Could Lay Off Quarter of Staff, Hit Local Hard - Tom McDevitt

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Tough times are ahead for staff at the Washington Times, according to a new memo from editor David Jackson. While the paper's post-Rev. Moon shake-up has so far been limited to upper management positions, that's about to change, with the Washington Post's Erik Wemple reporting that layoffs could cut as much as a quarter of the newsroom.

"Every news organization that distributes its content on paper is going through a transition that is designed to help it compete in a world where free news is widely available on the Internet," Jackson writes in the memo, which was obtained by Wemple. "It will soon be our time to go through such a transition."

Add to that the report from Fishbowl DC that Jackson took a motor-home to Washington after he took the job—suggesting he might not stay long—and it's all ominous news for Times reporters. If you're a local reporter, though, things could be is even worse. In a post-memo interview with Wemple, Jackson talks about how he sees the paper's local section as not particularly local:

"What I've told the staff every day is that, in the online world, our audience is national and even international. That's not to say we're not interested in local stories but it is to say that a story about D.C. or Maryland or Virginia has to be written in a way that uses the . . . story as a peg" for a national issue. That way, says Jackson, "our online readers in California and Texas and Florida and New York will have an interest in it too."

As Wemple points out, that statements suggests a good portion of the local section could be on the chopping block. It's hard to imagine that coverage of D.C. Council legislation or, say, homicides is interesting to Floridians.