



Department of Justice

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JACKSONVILLE, TX MAN SENTENCED FOR HURRICANE FRAUD

TYLER, TX – U.S. Attorney Rebecca A. Gregory announced that a 45-year-old Jacksonville, TX man has been sentenced to federal prison for hurricane related fraud in the Eastern District of Texas.

JOE MASTIN MURRAY pleaded guilty on Nov. 3, 2008, to making a false claim to the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) and was sentenced today to 6 months in federal prison by U.S. District Judge Leonard Davis. Murray was also ordered to pay \$2,000 in restitution to FEMA.

According to information presented in court, on Sep. 12, 2005, Murray applied for disaster assistance with FEMA. In his application, he fraudulently represented that he had been a resident of New Orleans on Aug. 29, 2005, when Hurricane Katrina hit. As a result of his application, Murray received a disaster assistance payment of \$2,000. An investigation revealed that the address in New Orleans that Murray submitted as his residence did not exist and that he was not a resident of New Orleans. Murray was indicted by a federal grand jury on Oct. 10, 2007, and charged with making a false claim to FEMA.

In September 2005, the U.S. Department of Justice created the Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force, designed to deter, investigate and prosecute disaster-related federal crimes such as charity fraud, identity theft, procurement fraud and insurance fraud. The Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force – chaired by Assistant Attorney General Alice S. Fisher of the Criminal Division – includes members of the FBI, the Federal Trade Commission, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, and the Executive Office for United States Attorneys, among others.

This case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Allen Hurst.

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