



# NEWS RELEASE

Office of the United States Attorney  
Eastern District of Texas

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **EAST TEXAN INDICTED FOR HURRICANE RELIEF FRAUD**

(Tyler, TX) A 43-year-old Palestine, Texas man has been indicted by a federal grand jury for posing as a Hurricane Katrina victim and attempting to defraud the federal government. The grand jury returned the two-count indictment against **WALTER RAY STALL**, also known as Ray Johnson, today in the Eastern District of Texas.

**Matthew D. Orwig, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Texas said, "It is unconscionable, with the suffering that has occurred, and the thousands of people who genuinely need the assistance of the federal government, that someone would attempt to take advantage of that suffering to his own benefit. Our office will vigorously pursue anyone who seeks fraudulent gain from this tragedy."**

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According to the indictment, Stall allegedly devised a scheme to defraud the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), an agency of the United States, by submitting a false claim that he was a resident of New Orleans and

entitled to receive disaster relief benefits because of flood damage to his residence, personal property, and vehicle, none of which was true. The indictment further alleges that, to execute the scheme, Mr. Stall caused to be mailed a treasury check from FEMA to an address in Tyler, Texas, thereby committing mail fraud.

The second count of the indictment alleges that Mr. Stall submitted a false claim to FEMA in an attempt to receive at least \$2,000 in disaster assistance.

If convicted, Stall faces up to 20 years in prison on the mail fraud count, five years on the false claim count and a fine of \$250,000 on each count.

It is important to remember that a grand jury indictment is not evidence of guilt. All defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

The case is part of an initiative by the Department of Justice Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force, set up by Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales last month to deter, investigate and prosecute disaster-related federal

crimes such as charity fraud, identity theft and insurance and benefits fraud.

The case is being investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation – a member of the Task Force – and the Tyler Police Department. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Alan Jackson and Arnold Spencer are prosecuting the case.

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