



# Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office  
Southern District of Texas

Donald J. DeGabrielle Jr. • United States Attorney

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<b>FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE</b>	<b>ANGELA DODGE</b>
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## **HOUSTON WOMAN CHARGED WITH HURRICANE RITA FRAUD**

*Indictment brings to 62 the number of individuals charged with FEMA fraud in the District*

(HOUSTON, Texas) - The indictment of a Houston woman Nov. 21, 2007, brings to 62 the total number of persons charged in this district for defrauding FEMA through the filing of false claims for hurricane disaster assistance relating to Hurricanes Katrina or Rita, United States Attorney Don DeGabrielle announced today.

Tracy L. Freeman, 35, Houston, appeared for arraignment before a U.S. Magistrate Judge in Houston Wed., Dec. 5, 2007, entered a plea of not guilty and has been ordered released on bond pending trial.

The one-count indictment accuses Freeman of filing a claim with FEMA for Hurricane Rita disaster assistance seeking emergency assistance for clothing and shelter falsely claiming her primary residence in Lake Charles, Louisiana, was damaged by Hurricane Rita. If convicted, Freeman faces a statutory maximum punishment of five years imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine.

This case was investigated by the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security-Office of Inspector General and is being prosecuted Assistant United States Attorney Ryan McConnell.

The United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Texas is a member of the Department of Justice's Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force, created to deter, detect and prosecute unscrupulous individuals who try to take advantage of the Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita disasters. Headed by Assistant Attorney General Alice S. Fisher, the Task Force is comprised of federal, state and local law enforcement investigating agencies and the United States Attorney's Offices in the Gulf Coast region and nationwide.

Anyone suspecting criminal activity involving disaster assistance programs can make an anonymous report by calling the toll-free Hurricane Relief Fraud Hotline, 1-866-720-5721, 24 hours a day, seven days a week until further notice. Information can also be emailed to the inspector general at [dhs hotline@dhs.gov](mailto:dhs hotline@dhs.gov) or sent by surface mail, with as many details as possible, to: Department of Homeland Security; Attn: Office of Inspector General, Hotline, Washington, D.C., 20528.

**An indictment or superseding indictment is a formal accusation of criminal conduct, not evidence. A defendant is presumed innocent unless and until convicted through due process of law.**

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