



Department of Justice

United States Attorney John L. Ratcliffe
Eastern District of Texas

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CONTACT: DAVILYN WALSTON
PHONE: (409) 839-2538
CELL: (409) 553-9881

LOUISIANA WOMAN SENTENCED FOR HURRICANE RELATED FRAUD IN EASTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS

BEAUMONT TX – United States Attorney John L. Ratcliffe announced that a 37-year-old Louisiana woman has been sentenced for hurricane related fraud in the Eastern District of Texas.

SHERRI HARRIS was sentenced today to 7 months in federal prison for filing a fraudulent claim with the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA). United States District Judge Marcia Crone presided over the sentencing hearing.

According to information presented in court, in 2005, Harris filed a disaster relief claim with FEMA claiming damage to her personal property and residence in Dayton, Texas, as a result of Hurricane Rita. An investigation revealed there was no such damage to the home and Harris did not live at the residence. In fact, she was in custody at the Calcasieu Parish jail in Lake Charles, LA at the time of the hurricane. Harris was indicted by a federal grand jury on January 18, 2007 and charged with making a materially false statement to FEMA in connection with applications she filed for federal disaster relief. She pleaded guilty to the charges on March 29, 2007.

In September 2005, Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales 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 is being investigated by the Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General and is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Dave Henderson.

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