

Department of Justice

United States Attorney John M. Bales Eastern District of Texas

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE THURSDAY, MARCH 24, 2011 http://www.justice.gov/usao/txe CONTACT: DAVILYN WALSTON PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER CELL: (409) 553-9881 DIRECT: (409) 981-7902

GEORGIA MAN ORDERED TO REPAY OVER \$18K FOR HURRICANE IKE RELATED FRAUD

BEAUMONT, Texas – A 41-year-old Grayson, Georgia man has been sentenced for hurricane-related fraud in the Eastern District of Texas announced U.S. Attorney John M. Bales today.

Morris Joseph pleaded guilty on Aug. 26, 2010, to making a false claim and was sentenced to two years probation and ordered to pay \$18,188.84 in restitution by U.S. District Judge Ron Clark on Mar. 22, 2011.

According to information presented in court, Joseph was employed by a contractor to assist disaster victims in applications for FEMA assistance. Joseph filed a false claim on behalf of a Beaumont resident whom he knew from high school. The application contained false statements regarding primary residence and made false assertions of sustained damage as the result of Hurricane Ike. Records show that the Beaumont resident had actually been evicted from her apartment prior to Hurricane Ike and that the apartment in question was not damaged by the storm. After Hurricane Ike, the Beaumont resident stayed in hotel for several months at government expense, a benefit she should not have received. As a result of Joseph's fraudulent activity, the Beaumont resident received \$18,188.84 in disaster assistance from FEMA. Joseph was indicted by a federal grand jury on Apr. 21, 2010.

This case was brought as part of this District's partnership with the National Center for Disaster Fraud (NCDF), a nationwide initiative to protect available funds and assistance for those victims of both natural and man-made disasters such as hurricanes, floods, tornadoes and the recent Gulf oil spill. If you have knowledge of fraud, waste, abuse or allegations of mismanagement involving disaster relief operations, you can contact the NCDF by either calling the hotline at (866) 720-5721, faxing the hotline at (225) 334-4707, emailing at disaster@leo.gov or in writing to National Center for Disaster Fraud, Baton Rouge, LA 70821-4909.

This case was investigated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security - Office of Inspector General and prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney James Peacock.

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