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U. S. Attorney's Office
Southern District of Texas
News Release**

Chuck Rosenberg • United States Attorney

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**GALVESTON MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO DEFRAUDING FEMA OF HURRICANE
KATRINA DISASTER FUNDS**

(GALVESTON, TX) United States Attorney Chuck Rosenberg announced today that Robert Foster, 39, of Galveston, Texas, has been convicted of filing a false claim with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for Hurricane Katrina Disaster funds and mail fraud.

At a hearing held today before United States Magistrate Judge John R. Froeschner, Foster pleaded guilty to the two federal felony charges. Judge Froeschner scheduled Foster's sentencing for March 3, 2006, before United States District Judge Samuel B. Kent. At sentencing, Mr. Foster faces a maximum punishment of five years imprisonment for the false claims conviction and twenty years imprisonment for the mail fraud conviction. Each conviction also carries a maximum fine of \$250,000. Foster, who has been in federal custody without bond since his arrest in October 2005, will remain in federal custody pending his sentencing.

Foster's conviction is the result of an investigation initiated by the Office of Inspector General of the Department of Homeland Security following the receipt of a tip. According to the tip, Foster had filed a false claim with FEMA for Hurricane Katrina disaster assistance. The investigation confirmed that Foster had applied for disaster assistance from FEMA in a telephone call on September 20, 2005. Foster claimed Hurricane Katrina had damaged his primary residence located at 2700 Whitney Avenue, Harvey, Acadia Parish, Louisiana.

Based on Foster's claim, the Department of Treasury mailed a \$2,000 expedited disaster assistance check to Foster at his residence in Galveston, Texas.

Investigating agents developed evidence proving that Foster had been living in Galveston when Hurricane Katrina struck. That evidence included a signed rental agreement and proof that Foster had moved into a Galveston residence on June 15, 2005, and before that move had been living in a Galveston hotel. Agents also found evidence that Foster had been named in Galveston Police

Department reports dated April 30, June 5, and August 8, 2005. After his arrest, Foster admitted that he had never resided at the Louisiana address he had listed in his claim for disaster assistance.

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 by Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales 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. This matter was investigated by the Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General and prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Gregg Costa.

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