



Department of Justice

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Eastern District of Texas

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 16, 2008
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HARDIN COUNTY COUPLE GUILTY OF HURRICANE RELATED FRAUD

BEAUMONT, TX - United States Attorney John L. Ratcliffe announced today that a Sour Lake, Texas couple has been convicted of hurricane related fraud in the Eastern District of Texas.

MARIANNA MILLER, 47, and **JASON CORY FREGIA**, 37, both of Sour Lake were found guilty by a jury today after a two-day trial before United States District Judge Ron Clark. Miller was convicted on three counts of making false statements and Fregia was convicted of one count of making a false statement.

According to information presented in court, Miller and Fregia claimed they owned property in Hardin County that was damaged by Hurricane Rita in September 2005. They applied for a disaster relief loan with the Small Business Administration and fraudulently obtained an SBA disaster assistance loan in the amount of \$25,800.00 for property they did not own.

Miller and Fregia face up to five years in federal prison and a \$250,000.00 fine for each violation. A sentencing date has been set for April 15, 2008.

In September 2005, the Attorney General's Office 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.

The case was investigated by the Small Business Administration and the Hardin County Sheriff's Office and was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney John Craft.

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