



Date:
Contact:

September 11, 2008
Joe Stinebaker
Communications Director
O) 713-755-4027
C) 713-503-2610
Joe.Stinebaker@cjo.hctx.net

NEWS RELEASE

JUDGE EMMETT DECLARES STATE OF DISASTER IN HARRIS COUNTY DUE TO HURRICANE IKE

Declaration Prevents Price Gouging, Grants Emergency Powers

Harris County Judge Ed Emmett declared a “state of disaster” in Harris County this morning, granting him wide-ranging powers to control evacuations, rescue efforts and the closure of county facilities. In addition, the declaration prevents local merchants from taking advantage of Hurricane Ike by charging exorbitant prices for emergency supplies.

Harris County Attorney Mike Stafford said the declaration allows his office to file suit against merchants or contractors who charge exorbitant or excessive fees. Stafford’s office may also seek penalties up to \$20,000 or, if the victim is over 65, up to \$250,000. Stafford recommends that consumers who believe they are being overcharged keep all receipts and file complaints with his office after Ike has passed.

The state of disaster remains in effect for seven days, unless extended by Commissioners Court. Further details will be available during a news conference featuring Emmett, Stafford and Houston Mayor Bill White at 12:30 p.m. at TranStar, 6922 Old Katy Road, Houston TX 77024.