

PRESS RELEASE
OFFICE OF THE CRIMINAL DISTRICT ATTORNEY
GALVESTON COUNTY, TEXAS
December 6, 2008

**Owner's Recovery of Property Removed During
Contracted Debris Removal on Bolivar Peninsula**

In response to concerns regarding the cleanup of debris on Bolivar Peninsula, specifically the subsequent attempts by the true owners to reclaim their property from the specific contractor or others demanding monies to restore the property to the rightful owner, please be advised of the following:

The removal of debris from a home or business site pursuant to contract with that owner does not equate or amount to the legal transfer of "ownership" of the removed property to the contractor or any other individual.

Simply stated, one's identifiable property being on another's land as a result of Hurricane Ike does not become "abandoned" property subject to another's claim of ownership above that of the true owner, simply because the property has been moved from one location to another.

We recognize the authority of the rightful owner of any property to be entitled to recover personal property that's been displaced as a result of Hurricane Ike, and pursuant to statute, specifically the Texas Penal Code, under Chapter 31, Section 31.01, we would look to that statute for possible theft charges, if a person holds that property and refuses to return it to the proper owner until a reward or other compensation has been paid.

The Theft statute clearly states that a person commits the offense of theft if he acquires control over property without the owner's consent, with the intent to restore the property only upon payment of reward or other compensation., and any citizen, whose property is being held unless such compensation is paid, should contact our office directly at 409-7662355 and complete a Citizen's Complaint form, which we will review for possible criminal theft charges.

Kurt Sistrunk
Criminal District Attorney
Galveston County