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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**MAN CONVICTED FOR ILLEGALLY DUMPING
POLLUTANTS INTO STORM DRAIN AT CITY HALL**

El Paso County Attorney José R. Rodríguez announced today the sentencing of an individual found guilty of dumping restaurant grease into a storm drain located next to El Paso City Hall.

On November 6, 2006 Lorenzo Chavez, Jr., employed by Chavez Plumbing and Sons, pled guilty to one charge of unauthorized discharge of waste or pollutant in violation of the Texas Water Code. Mr. Chavez was sentenced to 12 months probation, pay a \$5,000 fine, serve 80 hours of community service, and ordered to pay court costs.

The offense occurred in December 2004, when a citizen leaving City Hall observed a man dumping an oily thick substance from a container into the storm drain on Durango Street, in front of City Hall. The citizen wrote down the license plate number of the truck used by the defendant and reported the incident to her City Representative, who then referred the matter to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ). Upon further investigation, the defendant admitted dumping waste from a grease trap he, his father and brother were installing at a restaurant in City Hall.

The prosecution of the case was possible due to the coordinated efforts of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, El Paso Police Dept., El Paso Water Utilities, and the Environmental Services Code Compliance Office.

“The unauthorized discharge of waste or pollutants into waters of the state is a very serious environmental crime which we will prosecute to the fullest extent of the law,” said County Attorney José R. Rodríguez.

“Dumping anything but clean water into the storm drain is especially bad for the environment because the contaminant goes directly into the underground water or into the river, its ultimate destination. It is unfair for the victims of this type of illegal dumping, namely those of us who pay for water, to have to pay for the decontamination of water polluted by unscrupulous merchants who try to save a few dollars by illegally disposing of their waste.” Rodríguez added.

Unauthorized discharge is an on-going problem in the county of El Paso, and the County Attorney’s Office will continue to prosecute such offenders. The penalty for unauthorized discharge ranges from a fine of note less than \$1,000 but not more than \$50,000 for an individual, or up to 1 year in jail, or both. For an association or corporation, the fine is up to \$100,000. **To report illegal dumping or other environmental crime, call your local law enforcement agency: The Environmental Hotline at 1-888-6EL-PASO, El Paso Police Dept. at 832-4400, or El Paso Sheriff’s Dept. at 546-2280.**

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