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MADIGAN LAWSUIT: TELECOMMUNICATIONS SCAMMER SUBMITTED FAKE INVOICES TO ILLINOIS BUSINESSES, SCHOOLS & GOVERNMENT AGENCIES***Scammer Sent Phony Bills to Attorney General's Chicago, Belleville Offices***

Springfield — Attorney General Lisa Madigan filed a lawsuit today against a California-based company alleging it attempted to defraud Illinois businesses, schools and government agencies—including her own office—for unauthorized telecommunications maintenance services.

Madigan's lawsuit, filed in Sangamon County Circuit Court, alleges that UST Development Inc., doing business as US Telecom, issued falsified invoices to supposed customers throughout the state for telecommunications maintenance services in an attempt to defraud customers for as much as \$400 per invoice for services that were never authorized or requested.

Madigan said the invoices falsely led some consumers to believe they had contracted with UST for telephone maintenance services. But according to Madigan's lawsuit, none of the entities that received an invoice had actually authorized or agreed to receive services from UST, and none had heard of the company before receiving the invoice.

Madigan said entities that were billed for the fraudulent services included her offices in Chicago and Belleville. Other businesses, schools and local governments that received UST invoices are located in Cass, Cook, DuPage, Kankakee, Lake, Logan, Mercer, Moultrie, Peoria, Rock Island, Sangamon and St. Clair counties. As far as the Attorney General's investigation was able to determine, none of the entities UST falsely billed actually paid for the unauthorized charges.

"This company made up charges out of thin air," Madigan said. "We didn't have to go very far to find the evidence of this scam since fake invoices were also sent to my office."

The lawsuit alleges violations of the Illinois Consumer Fraud and Deceptive Business Practices Act and asks the court to void any pending contracts between UST and impose civil penalties on the company.

Assistant Attorney General Paul A. Isaac is handling the case for Madigan's Consumer Fraud Bureau.

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