

Department of Justice

Southern District of Mississippi



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DEFENDANT PLEADS GUILTY TO FEMA FRAUD

Jackson, Mississippi - United States Attorney Dunn Lampton announced today that ANNIE TRAVIS of Jackson, Mississippi entered a plea of guilty to making a false statement to the Federal Emergency Management Agency ("FEMA") in order to fraudulently obtain Katrina relief funds. TRAVIS admitted that on September 13, 2005, she made a telephonic application for individual assistance to FEMA claiming that her primary residence was a house at 337 Englewood Street, Jackson, MS, and that the house, along with personal property and an automobile at that residence had sustained damage as a result of Hurricane Katrina.

TRAVIS admitted as a part of the guilty plea that, although she owned the house at 337 Englewood Street, it was not her primary residence and neither the house, her personal property, nor her automobile sustained damage as a result of Hurricane Katrina. TRAVIS admitted that the house was dilapidated and had not been lived in for years and there had been no utilities hooked up since 2004. As a result of the false statements, TRAVIS fraudulently received a total of \$26,200 from FEMA.

“This brazen criminal conduct by Travis is an example of thievery from the public coffers which we cannot and will not tolerate,” said U.S. Attorney Lampton, “We will continue the zero tolerance policy set forth by the U.S. Attorney General and prosecute each and every instance of Katrina Fraud we can prove.”

TRAVIS is scheduled to be sentenced on May 19, 2006 at 9:00 a.m.

In September, 2005, Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales 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 from the FBI, the Federal Trade Commission, the Postal Inspector’s Office and the Executive Office of United States Attorneys, among others.

Pursuant to the Justice Department initiative, a local Katrina Fraud Task Force was formed. Recognizing the significance of this event, over twenty federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies have come together to jointly pursue and prosecute individuals who file false and fraudulent claims. The joint task force has also been working with county and local law enforcement in this effort.

If anyone has information concerning possible fraud being committed during the post-Katrina recovery effort, please call either the DHS-OIG Fraud Hotline at 1-866-720-5721 or the FBI Fraud Hotline at 1-800-225-5324.

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