

# NEWS RELEASE



*Office of the United States Attorney  
Western District of Louisiana*

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**For Immediate Release  
November 14, 2005**

## **MINDEN WOMAN PLEADS GUILTY TO THEFT OF FEMA FUNDS**

Shreveport, Louisiana . . . YOLANDA TOLIVER a/k/a Yolanda Brown, age 46, of Minden, Louisiana, arrested in October for claiming to be a Hurricane Katrina victim in order to fraudulently obtain FEMA relief funds, pleaded guilty today to theft of federal funds in U.S. District Court before United States District Judge Tom Stagg, announced United States Attorney Donald W. Washington. Sentencing is scheduled for March 1, 2006 at 1:15 p.m.

Relief officials received a registration request on the FEMA Disaster Assistance registration website from TOLIVER claiming that her primary residence and personal belongings in New Orleans, Louisiana had been destroyed by Hurricane Katrina. Based on the registration, FEMA mailed TOLIVER a check in the amount of \$2,000 for emergency food, shelter, clothing and medical assistance.

A follow-up investigation by federal and parish authorities revealed that TOLIVER was not from the New Orleans area, nor did she lose her home and belongings in Hurricane Katrina.

TOLIVER faces a sentence of up to ten years in prison, a fine of \$250,000, or both. Sentencing in federal court is determined by the discretion of federal judges and the governing statute. United States Sentencing Guidelines established by the United States Congress and the United States Sentencing Commission are only used as guidelines by the judge in determining the appropriate sentence. Parole has been abolished in the federal system.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Alexander C. Van Hook and was a joint investigation by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General, the U.S. Postal Inspector, and the Webster Parish Sheriff's Office

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, the Executive Office of the United States Attorneys, and United States Attorney Offices, among others.

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.

For further information, please contact United States Attorney Donald W. Washington at 337-262-6618 or First Assistant U.S. Attorney Bill Flanagan at 318-676-3600.

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