



# Department of Justice

**Acting United States Attorney Stan Harris  
Southern District of Mississippi**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **DEFENDANT PLEADS GUILTY TO IDENTITY THEFT AND RELATED KATRINA FRAUD**

Jackson, MS – Acting U.S. Attorney Stan Harris announced that Billy C. Williams, has pled guilty to stealing Hurricane Katrina disaster-assistance funds from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and to Aggravated Identity Theft in relation to a false application for disaster-assistance funds. Williams entered his guilty plea yesterday, Monday, August 3, 2009. Williams filed two fraudulent applications for disaster-related benefits with FEMA, one in his own name and another using the name and social security number of another person. In his application, Williams falsely used addresses in Pascagoula, Mississippi and Moss Point, Mississippi. Williams was residing in Central Mississippi at the time. Federal agents initially investigated Williams' victim for Katrina Fraud but quickly determined that Williams was responsible for the false application instead of his victim.

Williams faces a maximum penalty of ten years in prison and a \$250,000 fine for the theft of government funds and a mandatory two years in prison for submitting a false application for disaster-assistance funds using the identifying information of another person. By law, the two year prison term for Aggravated Identity Theft will be consecutive to any other sentence that Williams receives. He is scheduled for sentencing before U.S. District Williams H. Barbour, Jr. on October 13, 2009.

The case was investigated by Robert Gechijian of the United States Postal Inspector's Office and Jerry Coleman of the Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General. Assistant United States Attorney Dave Fulcher prosecuted the case.

In September, 2005, former Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales created the national 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 Acting Assistant Attorney General for the Criminal Division, Rita M. Glavin, includes members from the FBI, Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General, the Federal Trade Commission, the Department of Labor Office of Inspector General, 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, consisting of over 20 Federal and State law enforcement agencies, was formed in the Southern District of Mississippi to pursue and prosecute individuals who engage in fraud associated with the hurricanes. 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.