



Department of Justice

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Northern District of Georgia

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MISSISSIPPI WOMAN INDICTED ON CHARGES RELATED TO HURRICANE KATRINA FRAUD

Thompson Stole Identity of Good Samaritan Who Provided Temporary Housing

Atlanta, GA - CANDICE PAIGE THOMPSON, 38, of Ridgeland, Mississippi was arrested today on federal charges making of false statements to federal officials, credit card fraud, and aggravated identity theft. THOMPSON was arraigned before United States Magistrate Judge Russell G. Vineyard.

Acting United States Attorney Sally Quillian Yates said of the case, "Hurricane Katrina was one of the worst natural disasters in the history of the United States. In response, people from all over the country opened their homes, volunteered their time, and donated money to assist affected residents from the Gulf Coast. This defendant used the devastation of Hurricane Katrina as an opportunity to take advantage of the kindness of a stranger by stealing her identity and accruing thousands of dollars of credit card charges. Today's arrest highlights this office's commitment to ferreting out and prosecuting this reprehensible conduct."

"It is clearly shameful when a person takes advantage of one of our country's most tragic moments in our history. Such cruel behavior can never be justified, nor allowed by our society. It is the Postal Inspection Service's sole duty and mission to protect and serve the American Public from becoming victims of such a heinous and wrongful act," said Martin D. Phanco, Postal Inspector in Charge, Atlanta Division.

According to Acting United States Attorney Yates, the charges and other information presented in court, in September 2005, THOMPSON filed a claim for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) assistance, falsely claiming to be a resident of Biloxi, Mississippi, rendered homeless by Hurricane Katrina. While the claim was pending, FEMA referred THOMPSON to the American Red Cross and other Metro-Atlanta charities for other types of assistance. THOMPSON applied for and received housing assistance through a local charity. She was then put in contact with the victim, who had registered with the charity to provide housing to those displaced by Hurricane Katrina. While living in the victim's residence, THOMPSON stole the identity of the

victim and the victim's husband and opened several credit card accounts, accruing tens of thousands of dollars of charges. THOMPSON has been charged with one count of making false statements to a federal official, twelve counts of credit card fraud, and twelve counts of aggravated identity theft. The charges carry a maximum sentence of 5 years in prison on the false statement count, 10 years on the credit card fraud counts, 2 years on the aggravated identity theft counts and a fine of up to \$250,000. In determining the actual sentence, the Court will consider the United States Sentencing Guidelines, which are not binding but provide appropriate sentencing ranges for most offenders.

THOMPSON was indicted by a federal grand jury on September 22, 2009.

Members of the public are reminded that the indictment only contains charges. The defendant is presumed innocent of the charges and it will be the government's burden to prove the defendant's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt at trial.

In September 2005, the Attorney General 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 Lanny A. Breuer 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. <http://www.projectsafefchildhood.gov>.

This case is being investigated by Special Agents of the United States Postal Inspection Service.

Assistant United States Attorney Jamila M. Hall is prosecuting the case.

For further information please contact Sally Q. Yates, Acting United States Attorney, or Charysse L. Alexander, Executive Assistant United States Attorney, through Patrick Crosby, Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Attorney's Office, at (404) 581-6016. The Internet address for the HomePage for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia is www.usdoj.gov/usao/gan.