



Department of Justice

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BURKS SENTENCED FOR HURRICANE KATRINA FRAUD

ATLANTA, GA - MARKISHA BURKS, 27, of McDonough, Georgia was sentenced this afternoon by United States District Judge Thomas W. Thrash, Jr. to serve a federal prison term on charges of making a false statement to a governmental agency, mail fraud, wire fraud, and conversion of government funds, all in relation to a scheme to defraud the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

Acting United States Attorney Sally Quillian Yates said of today's sentencing, "In times of devastating disasters, government emergency assistance must be quickly and effectively delivered to those devastated and suffering families and individuals who are true disaster victims. This defendant tried to take advantage of FEMA's emergency aid which needed to go to real victims, and now she will pay the price."

BURKS was sentenced to one year and one day in federal prison to be followed by a term of supervised release and ordered to pay \$11,426.00 in restitution to FEMA and the American Red Cross. There is no parole in the federal system. BURKS was convicted by a federal jury on December 8, 2009, on all 12 counts of fraud, after a two-day trial.

According to Acting United States Attorney Yates, and the evidence presented at trial: Between September 21, 2005, and July 19, 2006, BURKS falsely represented to FEMA that she resided in New Orleans, Louisiana, at the time of Hurricane Katrina, and suffered residential and personal property losses, when in fact she resided in McDonough, Georgia, at the time of the hurricane. To perpetuate the fraud, BURKS gave FEMA a Louisiana address where she did not live, and falsely claimed that her residence had been damaged and that she lost personal property as a result of the hurricane. Based on her false statements, BURKS received \$2,000 in emergency housing assistance and more than \$9,000 for rental and other assistance from FEMA.

In September 2005, the Attorney General created the Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force 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.

This case was investigated by Special Agents of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General.

Special Assistant United States Attorney Gerald S. Sachs and Assistant United States Attorney William R. Toliver prosecuted 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.