



Department of Justice

United States Attorney Sally Quillian Yates
Northern District of Georgia

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<http://www.justice.gov/usao/gan/>

CONTACT: John Horn

(404)581-6335

FAX (404)581-6160

FEMA FRAUDSTER SENTENCED TO FEDERAL PRISON

Filed Over 30 Fraudulent Claims For Disaster Relief for Hurricanes, Tornado, Flood

ATLANTA, GA - DESIMA JAMES, 30, of Atlanta, Georgia, was sentenced today by United States District Judge Charles A. Pannell, Jr. to serve two years and nine months in federal prison on charges of mail fraud for fraudulently obtaining FEMA disaster assistance funds intended for the victims of several different federally declared disasters.

United States Attorney Sally Quillian Yates said of the case, "This week marks the fifth anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, one of the deadliest hurricanes in the history of the United States. Ms. James attempted to take advantage of that tragedy by filing numerous fraudulent claims for disaster relief with FEMA and stealing assistance intended for the real victims. The fraudulent Katrina claims were just the beginning -- in only a few months, he filed over 30 fraudulent claims, falsely claiming to have been a victim of five different natural disasters in five different states."

JAMES was sentenced to two years and nine months in prison to be followed by three years of supervised release, and ordered to pay restitution to the government in the amount of \$33,734. JAMES was convicted of these charges after pleading guilty on June 28, 2010.

According to United States Attorney Yates, the charges and other information presented in court: From September through December 2005, JAMES filed over 30 fraudulent claims for disaster relief with FEMA, claiming to have been a victim of Hurricane Katrina in Louisiana, Hurricane Rita in Louisiana and Texas, Hurricane Wilma in Florida, severe storms and flooding in New Hampshire, and a tornado and severe storms in Indiana. In making these claims, JAMES represented that he was living at various addresses in Louisiana, Texas, Florida, New Hampshire, and Indiana, when in fact he did not live at the claimed addresses during the time of the declared disasters. In addition to filing claims under his real name and Social Security number, JAMES also filed claims under the names "James Desima," "Terrell James," and "James Terrell," and used different Social Security numbers not belonging to him. Based on his

misrepresentations, JAMES received over \$30,000 in disaster assistance funds from FEMA.

This case was investigated by Special Agents of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General, and Postal Inspectors with the United States Postal Inspection Service.

Assistant United States Attorney Stephen H. McClain prosecuted the case.

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>

For further information please contact Sally Q. Yates, United States Attorney, or John Horn, First Assistant United States Attorney, at (404) 581-6335. The Internet address for the HomePage for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia is www.justice.gov/usao/gan.