



# Department of Justice

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Middle District of Louisiana

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## **ANOTHER PLEADS GUILTY IN BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA, ON DISASTER RELIEF FRAUD CHARGES**

BATON ROUGE, LA – United States Attorney David R. Dugas announced that another Louisiana resident pled guilty today in federal court on fraud charges related to a hurricane disaster relief program.

LAKEISHA L. ATKINS, age 24, of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, pled guilty today before U.S. District Court Judge James J. Brady to Count Three of an indictment charging her with wire fraud. ATKINS was charged in the indictment with fraudulently claiming and receiving disaster unemployment assistance benefits that the U.S. Department of Labor and the Louisiana Department of Labor made available to individuals who became unemployed as a result of Hurricane Katrina. The stipulated factual basis contained in the parties' plea agreement states that on numerous occasions between November 26, 2005, and June 3, 2006, ATKINS falsely certified to the Louisiana Department of Labor that she was unemployed as a result of Hurricane Katrina. ATKINS received \$5,178 in unemployment assistance benefits to which she was not entitled. The stipulated factual basis contained in the parties' plea agreement also stated that ATKINS caused FEMA to disburse an additional \$2,000 in disaster assistance benefits by causing a fraudulent application for FEMA disaster assistance benefits to be submitted in her name, and then executing two written declarations in support of the application that contained additional false statements.

The case was investigated by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Inspector General, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General. As a result of her guilty plea to Count Three, ATKINS faces a maximum sentence of twenty (20) years imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, or both. As part of the plea agreement, ATKINS has agreed to pay \$7,178 in restitution. The U.S. Attorney's Office will dismiss Counts One and Two of the indictment when ATKINS is sentenced on Count Three.

The number of individuals who have been charged in the Middle District of Louisiana with violations related to hurricane disaster relief funds stands at one hundred forty-nine.

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 the FBI, the U.S. Inspectors General community, the U.S. Secret Service, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, the Executive Office for United States Attorneys and others.

For further information, contact David R. Dugas, U.S. Attorney for the Middle District of Louisiana, or Lyman Thornton, First Assistant U.S. Attorney, at (225) 389-0443. Anyone suspecting criminal activity involving disaster assistance programs can make an anonymous report by calling the toll-free Hurricane Relief Fraud Hotline, 1-866-720-5721, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, until further notice. Information can also be emailed to the Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force at [HKFTF@leo.gov](mailto:HKFTF@leo.gov) or sent by surface mail, with as many details as possible, to Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force, Baton Rouge, LA 70821-4909.

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