



Department of Justice
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Middle District of Louisiana

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**ANOTHER SENTENCED IN BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA,
ON DISASTER RELIEF FRAUD CHARGES**

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

LAKEISHA L. ATKINS, age 24, of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, pled guilty on July 31, 2008, to Count Three of an indictment charging her with wire fraud. ATKINS was charged 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 plea agreement stated 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 plea agreement also stated that ATKINS caused the Federal Emergency Management Agency (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.

ATKINS was sentenced today by U.S. District Court Judge James J. Brady to five years of probation and \$7,178 in restitution. The U.S. Postal Inspection Service, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General, and the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Inspector General conducted the investigation of this matter.

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 sixty-five.

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 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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