



Department of Justice

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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 yesterday on fraud charges related to a hurricane disaster relief program. GERALDINE J. FRANKLIN, age 50, of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, pled guilty on January 15, 2009, to two counts of making a false claim in connection with applications submitted to federal agencies providing Hurricane Katrina disaster assistance benefits. On or about September 9, 2005, FRANKLIN submitted a fraudulent application with the United States Department of Agriculture for Hurricane Katrina disaster food stamp assistance, falsely claiming disaster-related food expenses and falsely claiming that Hurricane Katrina damaged or destroyed her home and delayed or reduced her household income. On or about September 15, 2005, FRANKLIN submitted a fraudulent application for Hurricane Katrina disaster relief benefits with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), fraudulently misrepresenting her primary residence at the time of the storm and falsely claiming that Hurricane Katrina caused damage to her home and personal property at this fraudulent address. FRANKLIN was sentenced yesterday by U.S. District Court Judge James J. Brady to three years of probation, \$2,786 in restitution, and \$200 in special assessments. The U.S. Postal Service's Office of Inspector General, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture'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 seventy-two.

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 the Assistant Attorney General of the U.S. Department of Justice's 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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