



Department of Justice

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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.

HERMAN SHROPSHIRE, age 55, of Baton Rouge pled guilty today before Chief U.S. District Court Judge Ralph E. Tyson to an amended bill of information charging him with making a false claim for disaster assistance benefits. According to the factual basis in the plea agreement, SHROPSHIRE filed an application for Hurricane Katrina disaster assistance benefits on or about September 2005, falsely claiming that his primary residence at the time of the storm was in New Orleans, Louisiana. In fact, SHROPSHIRE was living in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, at the time. The fraudulent application caused the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to disburse two checks for disaster assistance totaling \$4,358. The case was investigated by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General. As a result of his guilty plea, SHROPSHIRE faces a maximum sentence of five years imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, or both.

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-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 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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