



# Department of Justice

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**RED CROSS VOLUNTEER AND HIS SISTER CHARGED WITH  
STEALING AND USING MORE THAN 100 RED CROSS DEBIT CARDS  
INTENDED FOR HURICANE EVACUEES PLEAD GUILTY IN FEDERAL COURT**

*Each Faces Up to 10 Years Imprisonment*

United States Attorney Richard B. Roper announced that Brian Oneal Hines, age 21, and his sister, Charmaine Denise Hines, age 32, pled guilty yesterday before the Honorable Jane J. Boyle, United States District Judge, to one count of an indictment charging them with the fraudulent use of an access device. Both defendants have been in custody since their arrest in early December on charges outlined in a federal criminal complaint that they used stolen Red Cross debit cards to fraudulently obtain goods and services. Each defendant faces a maximum statutory sentence of 10 years imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine. Sentencing is set for April 6, 2006.

“We stand committed to vigorously prosecute those who try to fraudulently obtain hurricane relief benefits,” said U.S. Attorney Roper.

Brian and Charmaine Hines admitted to their role in the scheme. Brian Hines was both a paid Red Cross temporary worker and an unpaid Red Cross volunteer. He assisted the Red Cross by performing several duties, including evacuee interviews, distribution of client assistance cards, and data entry. Brian Hines was authorized access to Red Cross debit cards (client assistance cards) and was authorized to activate and load these debit cards with a pre-approved dollar limit.

Brian Hines admitted that he used his position of trust and stole approximately 100 Red Cross debit cards which were intended to provide financial aid to evacuees. He then made several lists at different times which contained stolen debit card numbers and both actual and fictitious cardholder names. As part of his effort to cover up and further his scheme, he also used fictitious cardholder names when he activated stolen Red Cross debit cards. He then took these lists to a computer and made unauthorized activations of these stolen debit cards. These unlawful and fraudulent activations allowed him, or anyone else, to then make unauthorized cash withdrawals or merchandise purchases of up to \$4695.00 per stolen debit card. On some stolen debit cards, Brian Hines reloaded values for the same stolen debit card after that card's value had been depleted.

Brian Hines concealed many stolen debit cards as well as lists of stolen debit card account numbers and fictitious account holder names in his automobile and at his residence in Dallas. He repeatedly took these stolen and fraudulently activated debit cards to local banks in the Dallas area where he then used ATM machines to make cash withdrawals.

Brian Hines admitted that he used the stolen funds to purchase automobiles, jewelry and clothing either for himself, or family members and friends. He also admitted that he gave several family members and friends several stolen debit cards as well as cash obtained from these stolen cards. To one particular friend, the defendant gave a large amount of cash and purchased a used automobile.

Brian Hines gave approximately 20-25 stolen Red Cross debit cards to his sister and co-defendant, Charmaine Denise Hines, telling her they were stolen from the Red Cross. Both Brian and Charmaine Hines used the stolen Red Cross debit cards to obtain cash and purchase merchandise. After Charmaine Hines received these stolen debit cards, she fraudulently obtained at least \$15,000 by using several stolen Red Cross debit cards to make fraudulent withdrawals from ATM machines at several banks in the Dallas area. She used the funds to purchase clothing, shoes, and jewelry.

During the period from September 1, 2005 through sometime on or about December 15, 2005, both Brian and Charmaine Hines fraudulently used, and aided and abetted others in using, stolen Red Cross debit cards which resulted in substantial financial losses to the Red Cross. Although the total loss amount is undetermined, the above scheme caused losses to the Red Cross of at least \$230,033.

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 members from the FBI, the Federal Trade Commission, the Postal Inspector's Office, and the Executive Office of the United States Attorneys, among others.

U.S. Attorney Roper praised the investigative efforts of the U.S. Secret Service and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney David Jarvis.

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