



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 today that another Louisiana resident was sentenced on fraud charges related to a hurricane disaster relief program.

DEBRA D. JACKSON, age 39, of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, pled guilty on October 22, 2008, to Count One of an indictment charging her with wire fraud. JACKSON filed an application for Hurricane Katrina disaster assistance benefits on August 30, 2005, but FEMA determined that she was not eligible for expedited disaster assistance. On September 19, 2005, JACKSON filed a second application, this time falsely claiming that her primary residence at the time of the storm was on Avenue L in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and that her home and personal property at that address suffered damage as a result of Hurricane Katrina. JACKSON also falsely claimed that Hurricane Katrina caused her to have an essential need for food, clothing, and shelter. In fact, JACKSON was not living at the Avenue L address at the time of the storm, and she did not have storm-related damage at that address. The fraudulent application caused the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to disburse \$2,000 by electronically transferring such funds into a bank account that JACKSON had identified in her fraudulent application for FEMA benefits. JACKSON was sentenced today by U.S. District Court Judge Frank J. Polozola to three years of probation and \$2,000 in restitution. The U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Office of Inspector General, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General, and the U.S. Secret Service 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-one.

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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