



Department of Justice

United States Attorney Dunn Lampton
Southern District of Mississippi

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CONTACT: SHEILA WILBANKS
PHONE: (601) 965-4480
FAX: (601) 965-4409

MISSISSIPPI WOMAN PLEADS GUILTY TO KATRINA FRAUD

JACKSON, Miss - Belinda Bell, of Lauderdale, Mississippi, pled guilty to submitting a false claim to FEMA for Hurricane Katrina disaster assistance funds, U.S. Attorney Dunn Lampton announced today. Bell caused \$26,200 to be mailed from FEMA by providing a false address in Saucier, Mississippi, and claiming hurricane damage at that address.

Bell will be sentenced before U.S. District Judge William H. Barbour, Jr. on June 14, 2007. She faces a maximum sentence of 5 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

In September, 2005, Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales created the national 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 for the Criminal Division, Alice S. Fisher, includes members from the FBI, the Federal Trade Commission, the Department of Labor Office of Inspector General, the Postal Inspector's Office and the Executive Office of United States Attorneys, among others.

Pursuant to the Justice Department initiative, a local Katrina Fraud Task Force, consisting of over 20 Federal and State law enforcement agencies, was formed in the Southern District of Mississippi to pursue and prosecute individuals who engage in fraud associated with the hurricanes.

If anyone has information concerning possible fraud being committed during the post-Katrina recovery effort, please call either the DHS-OIG Fraud Hotline at 1-866-720-5721 or the FBI Fraud Hotline at 1-800-225-5324.

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