



Department of Justice

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Eastern District of Texas

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PLANO WOMAN INDICTED FOR HURRICANE RELATED FRAUD

SHERMAN TX – United States Attorney Matthew D. Orwig announced that a 45-year-old Plano woman pleaded guilty today to charges of hurricane related fraud in the Eastern District of Texas.

VERNETT T. WILLIAMS admitted today before United States Magistrate Don D. Bush to theft of government money or property.

U.S. Attorney Orwig said his office remained diligent in the pursuit of any form of hurricane fraud, "Hurricane related fraud will remain a priority in this office and we will continue to aggressively investigate and prosecute suspected violators."

According to information presented in court, from December 2005 through April 2006, Williams willfully and knowingly provided false information to the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) in which she requested assistance for losses she reportedly suffered from Hurricane Katrina. Williams received \$5,909.80 in FEMA assistance to which she was not entitled as a result of her actions.

If convicted, Williams faces up to ten years in federal prison and a fine of up to \$250,000.00.

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 of the FBI, the Federal Trade Commission, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, and the Executive Office for United States Attorneys, among others.

The case is being investigated by the Department of Housing and Urban Development and prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Terri L. Hagan..

It is important to note that an indictment should not be considered as evidence of guilt and that all persons charged with a crime are presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

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