



# Department of Justice

## United States Attorney Dunn Lampton Southern District of Mississippi

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### **GUILTY VERDICT IN FIRST FEMA FRAUD TRIAL IN MISSISSIPPI**

JACKSON, Miss. — A Mississippi jury has found Bryan Michael Beets of Vicksburg, Miss., guilty of making false claims to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for hurricane relief funds, United States Attorney Dunn Lampton of the Southern District of Mississippi announced today. The evidence showed that Beets filed a false claim with FEMA using an address in Long Beach, Miss. which belonged to his ex-wife. At the time of Hurricane Katrina, Beets was living and working in Vicksburg, Miss. Additionally, the evidence showed that Beets received \$360 and 12 nights of hotel accommodations in Texas from the American Red Cross utilizing his ex-wife's address in Long Beach, Miss. Following the guilty verdict, Judge David C. Bramlette ordered that the U.S. Marshal take Beets into custody to await further hearings.

Beets was indicted on Oct. 25, 2005 as a result of a joint investigation conducted by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service with assistance provided by the U.S. Marshals Service. The maximum penalty for making fraudulent claims for relief funds is 5 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

U.S. Attorney Lampton said, "The jury's verdict should send a clear message to those who have illegally obtained money following Katrina that fraud will not be tolerated. I would suggest to any person who might consider committing fraud now or in the wake of a future disaster to reconsider. If you commit fraud and are caught, you will be prosecuted."

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 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 file false and fraudulent claims.

If anyone has information concerning possible fraud being committed during the post-Hurricane 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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