



Department of Justice

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**LOCAL MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO MAKING FALSE STATEMENTS
TO OBTAIN KATRINA DISASTER RELIEF FUNDS**

Washington, D.C. - A local resident, Charles Washington, has pleaded guilty to making a false statement on a Federal Emergency Management Agency "FEMA" application in order to obtain disaster relief from Hurricane Katrina, United States Attorney Kenneth L. Wainstein announced today.

Washington, currently residing in Middle River, Maryland, pled guilty on June 13, 2006, before United States District Judge Rosemary M. Collyer to the false statement charge. The false application allowed Washington to fraudulently obtain disaster funds to which he was not entitled. Washington faces a maximum of five years of imprisonment when he is sentenced on September 19, 2006.

According to the evidence presented at the recent plea hearing, on September 16, 2005, Washington, who was residing in the District of Columbia at the time, made an application to FEMA for Hurricane Katrina disaster relief benefits. As part of the application, Washington falsely claimed that he rented and was living at a single family residence in New Orleans, Louisiana, during Hurricane Katrina, and that his home was damaged and that he lost personal property as a result of the Hurricane. Investigators learned that Washington did not live at the residence during the Hurricane and was not known to the owner of the residence, who had been living at the residence since 2004. Washington later told investigators that he had no fixed address during the Hurricane. As a result of Washington's false application, FEMA disbursed three checks to him totaling \$14,749. Washington cashed one of the checks, but it appears the other two checks were cashed by other individuals.

In announcing the guilty plea, U.S. Attorney Wainstein commended the efforts of the Special Agent Jason Metrick of the Office of Inspector General for the Department of Treasury, Legal Assistant April Peeler of the United States Attorney's Office, and Assistant United States Attorney Diane Lucas, who investigated and prosecuted the case.

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