



Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office
Southern District of Texas

Tim Johnson • United States Attorney

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE	ANGELA DODGE
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TWO CHARGED IN FEMA FRAUD CONSPIRACY

Indictment brings to 102 the number of persons charged in the SDTX with defrauding FEMA through hurricane disaster relief programs

(HOUSTON) - The first of two defendants indicted for conspiring to make false claims for disaster relief with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) following Hurricane Katrina has been arrested, U.S. Attorney Tim Johnson announced today.

Odell Chambers, 41, was arrested this morning in his hometown of New Orleans by agents with the Department of Homeland Security. Chambers is charged along with Adrienne Breaux, 41, of Houston, in a one-count indictment with conspiring to make false claims and statements to FEMA in connection with requests for disaster relief assistance in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. A warrant remains outstanding for Breaux's arrest. Anyone having information regarding the whereabouts of Adrienne Breaux is asked to contact the Warrants Division of the United States Marshals Service at (713) 539-0232.

The indictment alleges that shortly after Hurricane Katrina made landfall in August 2005, Chambers and Breaux, both residents of New Orleans at the time, relocated to Houston. The two, who later married in February 2006, lived together at a Houston apartment located on Creekbend Drive. As the result of a claim filed by Breaux allegedly using a false Social Security number, the rent for this apartment was paid directly to the landlord with FEMA funds. Breaux is also alleged to have filed a second claim for rental assistance for a different address where she did not reside. In support of the second claim, Breaux allegedly submitted falsified rental receipts and a purported lease agreement. Breaux then received proceeds from FEMA, ostensibly for rental assistance, through funds transferred electronically to her bank account, according to the indictment. Breaux is alleged to have later filed a third claim for assistance in the name of one of her daughters using a false Social Security number.

Chambers is alleged to have filed a claim for rental assistance for the Creekbend Drive apartment while he was residing with Breaux, despite the fact that FEMA was already paying the rent on that apartment based on Breaux's first claim. Chambers allegedly submitted falsified rent receipts. As a result, FEMA dispersed purported rental assistance funds to Chambers through electronic funds transfer and check. Chambers later filed a second claim, allegedly using a false Social Security number. No benefits were paid on that claim. The indictment alleges FEMA disbursed more than \$101,000 to Breaux and Chambers as a result of the five claims.

The indictment, returned under seal by a Houston grand jury on Nov. 4, 2009, was unsealed this afternoon following Chambers' initial appearance before United States Magistrate Judge Louis Moore in New Orleans. Chambers has been ordered temporarily held in federal custody without bond pending a hearing on the government's motion to hold him without bond pending trial set for Thursday, Nov. 12. The case will be prosecuted in the Houston Division of the Southern District of Texas.

The investigation leading to the charges was conducted by agents with the Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Inspector General (HUD-OIG) and the Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General (DHS-OIG).

The United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Texas is a member of the Department of Justice's Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force, created by the Department of Justice to deter, detect and prosecute individuals who try to take advantage of the Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita disasters. The Task Force is comprised of federal, state and local law enforcement investigating agencies and the United States Attorney's Offices in the Gulf Coast region and nationwide.

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 inspector general at dhsorghotline@dhs.gov or sent by surface mail, with as many details as possible, to Department of Homeland Security, Attn: Office of Inspector General, Hotline, Washington, DC. 20528.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney David Searle.

***An indictment is a formal accusation of criminal conduct, not evidence.
A defendant is presumed innocent unless convicted through due process of law.***

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