



# Department of Justice

## United States Attorney Dunn Lampton Southern District of Mississippi

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
TUESDAY, August 5, 2008  
WWW.USDOJ.GOV/USAO/MSS

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

### TWO MISSISSIPPIANS PLEAD GUILTY TO KATRINA FRAUD

Gulfport, Miss. - Corey L. Mason of Picayune, Mississippi and Sarah L. Sonnier of Biloxi, Mississippi each pled guilty in U.S. District Court today to making a false claim to FEMA for Hurricane Katrina disaster assistance funds, U.S. Attorney Dunn Lampton announced.

Corey L. Mason admitted that he received a travel trailer from FEMA by providing a false address in Picayune, Mississippi, and claiming hurricane damage at that address. At the time Hurricane Katrina hit the Mississippi Gulf Coast, Mason was living in California. Mason will be sentenced by United States District Court Judge Sul Ozerden on November 7, 2008. He faces a maximum penalty of 5 years in prison and a \$250,000.00 fine.

Sarah L. Sonnier admitted that she received \$18,930.75 from FEMA by providing a former address in Biloxi, Mississippi, and claiming hurricane damage at that address. Sonnier also filed duplicate claims for assistance with the American Red Cross and received a total of \$3,330.00. Sonnier will be sentenced by United States Senior District Court Judge Walter Gex on November 5, 2008. She faces a maximum penalty of 5 years in prison and a \$250,000.00 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 Acting Assistant Attorney General for the Criminal Division, Matthew Friedrich, 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.

###