



Department of Justice

Acting United States Attorney Stan Harris
Southern District of Mississippi

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GULFPORT WOMAN, GUILTY OF KATRINA FRAUD, ORDERED TO REPAY OVER \$20,000.00 TO FEMA AND RED CROSS

GULFPORT, Miss. – Melissa McMorris, of Pine Bluff, Ark., was sentenced on Friday, June 5th, to serve 4 months of home confinement with electronic monitoring followed by 3 years of supervised release for fraud against the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Acting U.S. Attorney Stan Harris announced today. McMorris was also ordered to pay restitution in the amount of \$20,830.99 to FEMA and \$1,565.00 to Red Cross. Further, she must perform 70 hours of community service, as part of her supervised release. She pleaded guilty earlier this year to submitting a false claim to FEMA for Hurricane Katrina disaster assistance funds.

In September, 2005, former 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 Assistant Attorney General for the Criminal Division, Lanny A. Breuer, includes members from the FBI, Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General, 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.

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