



Department of Justice

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TWO MORE INDICTED AND ANOTHER SENTENCED ON DISASTER RELIEF FRAUD CHARGES IN BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA

BATON ROUGE, LA – United States Attorney David R. Dugas announced today that two more Louisiana residents have been indicted and another has been sentenced on fraud charges related to hurricane disaster relief programs.

SHANDOLYN D. THOMAS, age 22, of Baker, Louisiana, was charged in an indictment yesterday by a federal grand jury with three counts of mail fraud and one count of making a false and fraudulent claim for disaster assistance benefits with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The indictment alleges that in or about September 2005, THOMAS devised a scheme to defraud FEMA to obtain money and property from FEMA, by causing a fraudulent application for Hurricane Katrina disaster relief benefits to be submitted that falsely claimed THOMAS' primary residence at the time of storm was in New Orleans, Louisiana. The indictment charges that the application falsely claimed that Hurricane Katrina caused damage to THOMAS' home and personal property in New Orleans when, in fact, THOMAS was not living in New Orleans at the time of the storm. The charges resulted from an investigation conducted by the U.S. Postal Inspection Service and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General. If convicted on the mail fraud counts, THOMAS faces a maximum sentence of twenty years imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, or both, per count. If convicted on the false claim count, THOMAS faces a maximum sentence of five years imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, or both.

WAKITA A. TONEY, age 21, of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, was charged in a two-count indictment yesterday with mail fraud (Count One) and with making a false and fraudulent claim for disaster assistance benefits (Count Two). The indictment alleges that in or about September 2005, TONEY devised a scheme to defraud FEMA to obtain money and property from FEMA, by causing a fraudulent application for Hurricane Katrina disaster relief benefits to be submitted that falsely claimed TONEY's primary residence at the time of storm was in New Orleans, Louisiana. The indictment charges that the application falsely claimed that Hurricane Katrina caused damage to TONEY's home and personal property in New Orleans when, in fact, TONEY was not living in New Orleans at the time of the storm. The charges resulted from an investigation conducted by the U.S. Postal Inspection Service and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General. If convicted on Count One, TONEY faces a maximum sentence of twenty years imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, or both. If convicted on Count Two, LEE faces a maximum sentence of five years imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, or both.

KIMBERLY S. BOWMAN, age 22, of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, pled guilty on October 11, 2007, to Count One of an indictment charging her with mail fraud in connection with the filing of false and fraudulent claims with FEMA for disaster assistance benefits, and a false and fraudulent claim for disaster unemployment assistance. BOWMAN was sentenced today by U.S. District Court Judge John V. Parker to five years of probation and \$8,255 in restitution. The case was investigated by the U.S. Postal Inspection Service and the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Inspector General.

Today's indictments bring the total number of individuals who have been charged in the Middle District of Louisiana with violations related to hurricane disaster relief funds to one hundred forty-seven.

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 the FBI, the U.S. Inspectors General community, the U.S. Secret Service, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, the Executive Office for United States Attorneys and others.

For further information, contact David R. Dugas, U.S. Attorney for the Middle District of Louisiana, or Lyman Thornton, First Assistant U.S. Attorney, at (225) 389-0443. 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 Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force at HKFTF@leo.gov or sent by surface mail, with as many details as possible, to Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force, Baton Rouge, LA 70821-4909.

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