



Department of Justice

United States Attorney Deborah J. Rhodes
Southern District of Alabama

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ANOTHER ALABAMA RESIDENT INDICTED BY FEDERAL

GRAND JURY FOR FEMA FRAUD FOLLOWING HURRICANE KATRINA

MOBILE, Al. – Hannah Williams, of Jackson, Alabama, was indicted by a grand jury on federal FEMA fraud charges, United States Attorney Deborah J. Rhodes of the Southern District of Alabama announced today.

Williams, 48, of Jackson, Alabama, was charged in a five-count federal indictment with making false claims to the government, mail fraud, and wire fraud. Williams is charged with making a false and fraudulent application for disaster assistance from FEMA following Hurricane Katrina.

The indictment alleges that on September 12, 2005, Williams applied by telephone for disaster benefits from FEMA following Hurricane Katrina. Williams claimed that her primary residence and personal property had been damaged, but it had been more than eighteen months since she had moved out of the claimed residence, according to the indictment. Williams allegedly received \$22,904.31 from FEMA as a result of the fraudulent claim. Williams was arraigned on the charges this afternoon before United States Magistrate Judge Bert W. Milling.

Mail fraud and wire fraud each carry maximum penalties of twenty years' imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine. Making false claims to the government is punishable by a maximum sentence of five years' imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine.

“The Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force is continuing its investigations of those people who took advantage of last year's relief efforts to profit personally and fraudulently,” United States Attorney Deborah J. Rhodes said. “Those who engaged in such fraud will be brought to justice,” said Rhodes.

The investigation was conducted by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of the Inspector General. Assistant United States Attorney Sean Costello is

prosecuting the case.

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.

Anyone with information about fraudulent activity is encouraged to report it immediately through the Hurricane Relief Fraud Hotline at 1-866-720-5721, or via email at katrinafraud@dodig.mil.

An indictment is a determination by a grand jury that there is probable cause to believe that offenses have been committed by the defendant. The defendant, of course, is presumed innocent until and unless he or she is proven guilty at trial.

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