



Department of Justice

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PRISON INMATE AT TIME OF KATRINA PLEADS GUILTY TO KATRINA FRAUD

Gulfport, Mississippi - United States Attorney Dunn Lampton announced today that Tommy Bingham entered a guilty plea in United States District Court for submitting a fraudulent claim to FEMA for Hurricane Katrina disaster relief funds. Bingham admitted using a false address in Biloxi, Mississippi in order to receive disaster relief benefits from FEMA. At the time Hurricane Katrina hit the Mississippi Gulf Coast, Bingham was in prison at Federal Correctional Institute Yazoo, in Yazoo City, Mississippi. Bingham was released from federal prison two days after the landfall of Katrina and then filed his claim with FEMA.

Bingham faces a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison and a \$250,000 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 Assistant Attorney General for the Criminal Division, Alice S. Fisher, 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.

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