



Department of Justice

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MISSISSIPPI WOMAN PLEADS GUILTY TO KATRINA FRAUD

JACKSON, Miss. – K’Hari Danielle Gowdy, of Picayune, Miss., pled guilty to submitting false claims to the Mississippi Department of Employment Security and the Louisiana Department of Labor for Hurricane Katrina disaster unemployment assistance funds, U.S. Attorney Dunn Lampton of the Southern District of Mississippi announced today. Gowdy also pled guilty to defrauding the Picayune Housing Authority beginning prior to Katrina.

Gowdy obtained over \$6,944.00 in disaster unemployment benefits and in excess of \$1800.00 from the Housing Authority. Gowdy also filed multiple claims with the American Red Cross obtaining excess benefits, and she received FEMA rental assistance while in public housing.

Gowdy faces a maximum penalty of five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine on each count. She is scheduled for sentencing before U.S. District Judge Walter J. Gex. III on April 25, 2007.

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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