



Department of Justice

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Middle District of Louisiana

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TWO MORE PLEAD GUILTY IN BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA, ON FEDERAL FEMA FRAUD CHARGES

BATON ROUGE, LA – Two more Louisiana residents pled guilty in federal court on fraud charges related to hurricane disaster relief programs, United States Attorney David R. Dugas announced today.

EDWIN L. FRANKLIN, age 24, of Port Allen, Louisiana, pled guilty before Chief U.S. District Court Judge Ralph E. Tyson to a two-count indictment charging him with making a false and fraudulent claim for Hurricane Katrina disaster assistance benefits and for making false and fraudulent statements to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (“FEMA”) regarding damages incurred as a result of Hurricane Katrina. The indictment alleges that the fraudulent claim filed by FRANKLIN resulted in a total disbursement of \$9,553.76 to FRANKLIN by FEMA. The case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. As a result of his guilty plea to Counts One and Two of the indictment, FRANKLIN faces a maximum sentence of ten (10) years imprisonment, a \$500,000 fine, or both.

DORETTA V. FRANCIS, age 35, of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, pled guilty before U.S. District Court Judge James J. Brady to a Bill of Information charging her with making a false and fraudulent claim for Hurricane Katrina disaster assistance benefits. The case was investigated by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General. As a result of her guilty plea, FRANCIS faces a maximum sentence of five (5) years imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, or both.

The number of individuals who have been charged in the Middle District of Louisiana with violations related to hurricane disaster relief funds stands at seventy-nine.

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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