



Department of Justice

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Southern District of Alabama

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ALABAMA WOMAN SENTENCED TO MORE THAN SIX YEARS

IN PRISON FOR KATRINA FRAUD

MOBILE, AL-- Lawanda T. Williams, also known as Lawanda Johnson, was sentenced today to more than six years in prison for defrauding the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) of more than \$267,000 and for aggravated identity theft following Hurricane Katrina, United States Attorney Deborah J. Rhodes of the Southern District of Alabama announced.

Williams was sentenced to 75 months in prison, and was ordered to pay full restitution to FEMA in the amount of \$267,377.15. In addition, Williams was ordered to forfeit all of the property she purchased with the proceeds of her fraud, including four automobiles, real estate, televisions and other electronics.

Williams pled guilty in September, 2006, to making false claims to the government, wire fraud, and aggravated identity theft in connection with twenty-eight fraudulent claims for disaster assistance she made to FEMA after Katrina. Williams admitted that her residence in Jackson, Alabama was not damaged by the hurricane and that she filed twenty-eight fraudulent claims for assistance, falsely claiming to have lived at various addresses in Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Florida. In those applications, Williams admitted using Social Security numbers of other people and providing FEMA with fraudulent and fictitious documents that purported to prove her ownership of property she did not own.

“Ms. Williams used Hurricane Katrina and the relief efforts as an opportunity to make hundreds of thousands of dollars by lying and by stealing other people’s identities,” said Rhodes. “The Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force is actively working to bring to justice those who took advantage of the recovery efforts to enrich themselves.”

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.

The case was investigated by the Department of Homeland Security, Office of the Inspector General, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the United States Postal Inspection Service. The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Sean Costello.

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