



# Department of Justice

Alice H. Martin  
United States Attorney  
Northern District of Alabama

---

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**May 31, 2006**

[www.usdoj.gov/usao/aln](http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/aln)

### **THREE CHARGED WITH DEFRAUDING FEMA**

**BIRMINGHAM, AL** - A federal grand jury has returned indictments against three North Alabama residents on FEMA fraud charges. The indictments filed 5/31/06 in U.S. District Court include:

JOSHUA DAVID MOSCATO, 22, of Huntsville, charged with mail fraud and theft of government property. It is alleged that MOSCATO posed as a Hurricane Katrina evacuee and lied about his place of residence in order to obtain financial assistance from FEMA totaling \$2,000.

JENNIFER LYNN YOUNG, 22, of Huntsville, charged with making a false claim and theft of government property. It is alleged that YOUNG lied about her place of residence in order to receive financial assistance from FEMA totaling \$4,358.

CHRISTY LADON SMITH, 33, of Gadsden, is charged with mail fraud and theft of property. It is alleged that SMITH lied about her place of residence in order to obtain financial assistance from FEMA totaling \$2,000.

“People who use fraud and deceit in order to take advantage of a natural disaster for personal gain cheat not only the government, but also cheat those who truly need assistance,” stated U.S. Attorney Alice H. Martin. “Be assured that investigations are continuing, and that there will be consequences for those who have engaged in such fraud and deceit.”

The maximum penalty for making false claims to the government is five years in prison and a fine of \$250,000. Mail fraud has a maximum penalty of twenty years in prison and a fine of \$250,000. Theft of government money or property has a maximum penalty of ten years in prison and a fine of \$250,000.

With these indictments, a total of nine defendants have been charged with FEMA fraud in the Northern District of Alabama. Previously charged, in similar cases, were:

Angie Lanora Harris, 37, of Etowah County, was indicted 11/30/05, pled guilty 1/24/06 and was sentenced to 36 months probation and ordered to pay restitution of \$2,000.

Theresa Gaskey Clark, also known as Theresa Harris, 35, of Etowah County, was indicted 11/30/05, pled guilty 4/24/06 and is currently awaiting sentencing.

Phyllis Ratliff, also known as Phyllis Washington, 45, of Tuscaloosa County, was indicted 11/30/05 and is currently a fugitive from justice.

Wesley D. Warren, 26, of Walker County, was indicted 11/30/05, pled guilty 2/27/06 and currently awaits sentencing.

Kenneth Edward McCain, 48 of Birmingham, was indicted 2/28/06 and the case remains pending.

Gladys Mae Whitt, 43, of Birmingham, was indicted 2/28/06, pled guilty 4/18/06 and currently awaits sentencing.

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 Task Force is assisted by local, state and federal law enforcement.

Anyone with information about fraudulent activity is encouraged to report it immediately through the Department of Homeland Security Office of the Inspector General's Hurricane Relief Hotline at 1-866-720-5721.

Members of the public are reminded that a criminal complaint contains only charges. A defendant is presumed innocent of the charges and it will be the government's burden to prove a defendant's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt at trial.

United States Attorney's Office Press Releases are also on the Internet visit [www.usdoj.gov/usao/aln](http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/aln)  
Jill Ellis, Public Information Officer, 205-244-2015