



**Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Southern District of Texas**

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**KATRINA EVACUEE PLEADS GUILTY TO FRAUDULENTLY OBTAINING
DISASTER UNEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE**

HOUSTON, TX – Edward Good, 41, a Hurricane Katrina evacuee who lived in Conroe, Texas, after the storm, was convicted today of conspiring to commit wire fraud based on his scheme to fraudulently obtain Louisiana Department of Labor Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA) debit cards.

United States Attorney Don DeGabrielle announced today that at a hearing held before United States District Judge Melinda Harmon, Good pleaded guilty to the federal felony charge of conspiracy to commit wire fraud. Judge Harmon scheduled Neville's sentencing for July 14, 2006. At sentencing, Mr. Good faces a maximum punishment of five years of imprisonment. The conviction also carries a maximum fine of \$250,000. Mr. Good will remain in federal custody, without bond, pending sentencing.

DUA provides financial assistance to individuals whose employment or self-employment is lost or interrupted as a direct result of a major disaster declared by the President of the United States. On August 29, 2005, President Bush declared a major disaster for Louisiana as a result of Hurricane Katrina. The Louisiana Department of Labor administers the DUA program for the State of Louisiana. Funding for the DUA program comes directly from federal funds provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). DUA benefits are available to individuals beginning after the date the major disaster began and up to 26 weeks after the disaster declaration, as long as their unemployment continues to be a result of the major disaster. The maximum benefit amount is \$98 per week for 26 weeks for a total possible benefit of \$2,548.

At today's hearing, the United States told the court that the investigation of Mr. Good began on January 19, 2006, when Houston Police Department officers stopped a vehicle in which Good was a passenger. The officers discovered narcotics in the vehicle and a search of Good's person revealed a wallet containing eight DUA debit cards issued by the Louisiana Department of Labor. Seven of the debit cards were in the names of other individuals.

Also recovered from the vehicle was a notebook that listed the names, addresses and social security numbers of the individuals whose names appeared on the debit cards. The notebook also listed the names and addresses of Louisiana employers that later investigation revealed were used in the applications for the cards found in Good's wallet.

Good told federal agents from the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Labor that he resided in Marrero, Louisiana, until Hurricane Katrina struck and caused him to evacuate to the Conroe, Texas, area. Good said he filed for DUA with the state of Louisiana in his own name and received a debit card worth a total of approximately \$2500 within a few days.

Good admitted that after obtaining his own DUA debit card, he devised a scheme to apply for cards using the names of Conroe-area residents who were not evacuees and had not worked in Louisiana. Good said the individuals received either money or free illegal drugs in exchange for providing their identification information. After obtaining the identification information from these individuals, Good filed applications in the names of these individuals using the internet, listing a false prior place of employment in Louisiana.

Good estimated that he had personally filed approximately 50 such claims since September 2005, and personally received about \$70,000 in unemployment assistance debit cards since September 2005.

Documents obtained from the Louisiana Department of Labor Office of Regulatory Service confirmed that applications for the cards found in Good's wallet were submitted online, and that the cards were mailed to motels in Conroe, Texas where Good was staying.

Good is one of 15 individuals who have been charged to date in the Southern District of Texas with fraud relating to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita relief programs. The United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Texas is a member of the Department of Justice's Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force, created by Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales to deter, detect and prosecute unscrupulous individuals who try to take advantage of the Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita disasters. Headed by Assistant Attorney General Alice S. Fisher, the Task Force is comprised of federal, state, and local law enforcement investigating agencies and the United States Attorney's Offices in the Gulf Coast region and nationwide. This case was investigated by the Department of Labor Office of Inspector General and the Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General, and is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Gregg Costa.

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