

Department of Justice

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Eight Portland Residents Plead Guilty in Hurricane Katrina Disaster Relief Fraud Scheme

Fraudulent FEMA disbursements of \$340,468 made to defendants

PORTLAND, OREGON - Between March 27, 2006 and April 6, 2006, eight Portland residents have pleaded guilty in connection with the fraudulent receipt of Hurricane Katrina disaster relief funds.

Chantel Curry, 38; Dominique S. Andrew, 19; Virger M. Garland, 46; Jennifer M. Jones, 36; Trina M. Wilson, 37; and Steven D. Brown, 50; have each pleaded guilty to one count of Receipt of Stolen Government Property, 18 U.S.C. § 641, which carries a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. James A. Irby, 46, and Miranda J. Nelson, 20, have each pleaded guilty to one count of Mail Fraud, 18 U.S.C. Sec. 1341, which carries a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison and a \$1,000,000 fine.

Harold Allen Miller, Jr. 41, of Portland, Oregon, charged with Mail Fraud, 18 U.S.C. § 1341, which carries a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison and a \$1,000,000 fine, is scheduled to enter a plea of guilty on April 21, 2006 at 9:30.

Olelia L. Brown, 21, who is charged with two counts of Receipt of Stolen Government Property, 18 U.S.C. Sec. 641, each of which carries a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine, is set for trial on June 5, 2006.

The indictment naming James Irby and Miranda Nelson alleged that Irby and Nelson devised a scheme whereby they would apply to FEMA for Katrina disaster relief in their own names and in the names of other persons by falsely representing that the applicant was displaced from their primary residence and needed shelter because of Hurricane Katrina. The indictment further alleged that Irby and Nelson would cause FEMA to mail relief checks payable to the applicants to their address or the addresses of other persons participating in the scheme.

At his plea hearing on April 4, 2006, Irby admitted that he recruited other people to allow their names to be used by Irby and his girlfriend, Miranda Nelson, to apply for FEMA Hurricane Katrina disaster relief funds. Irby would then share in the proceeds of the FEMA checks. Irby admitted that he and Nelson caused fraudulent FEMA disbursements totaling \$340,468. Nelson made similar admissions at her plea hearing on April 6, 2006. The other defendants each admitted to participating in the scheme and receiving the proceeds of at least one FEMA check knowing it was stolen.

These prosecutions are supported by the Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force established by the United States Attorney General on September 8, 2005. Task Force members include the Department of Justice, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General, the Federal Trade Commission, the Postal Inspection Service, the Securities & Exchange Commission, and other federal agencies. This national task force, working with state and local agencies, will swiftly bring to justice those who seek to commit fraud in connection with payment of hurricane relief funds.

Anyone who has information relating to fraudulent receipt of Hurricane Katrina Disaster Assistance funds is urged to report it at www.ic3.gov, or the Department of Justice Katrina Fraud Task Force and Federal Trade Commission Consumer Response Center at (877) 382-4357, or (877) 362-2502 for persons with speech or hearing impairment

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Lance Caldwell. For questions please contact Public Information Officer Diane Peterson at (503) 727-1066.