



# Department of Justice

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## **TWO PLEAD GUILTY TO STEALING HURRICANE KATRINA FUNDS**

Atlanta, GA - HENRY P. EDWARDS, 41, of Atlanta, Georgia, and DWIGHT M. THOMAS, 21, of Doraville, GA, pleaded guilty today in federal district court to stealing FEMA funds that were intended for Hurricane Katrina victims.

“Let these cases be yet another example of our commitment to prosecute those criminals who took advantage of a terrible tragedy to enrich themselves,” said United States Attorney David E. Nahmias. “Our investigation into those who fraudulently obtained Hurricane Katrina funds is continuing.”

According to United States Attorney David E. Nahmias and the information presented in court:

On September 3, 2005, EDWARDS filed a false claim for emergency assistance with FEMA. EDWARDS claimed that he was a victim of Hurricane Katrina, and claimed that he lived at 701 Loyola Avenue, New Orleans, Louisiana when Hurricane Katrina made landfall. EDWARDS received, cashed, and spent the \$2,000 check FEMA sent to him for emergency assistance. FEMA later discovered that EDWARDS was residing in Atlanta, Georgia, when the hurricane made landfall, and not at the Louisiana address that he had provided. Further investigation revealed that 701 Loyola Avenue, New Orleans, is not an address for a residence, but is actually the address for a United States Post Office building.

On September 12, 2005, THOMAS filed a false claim with FEMA for emergency assistance and rental assistance claiming that he was residing at 2700 Whitney Ave, in Harvey, Louisiana, when Hurricane Katrina made landfall. THOMAS received and spent both the \$2,000 emergency assistance check, and the \$2,358 rental assistance check, even though he was not a victim of Hurricane Katrina. Investigation revealed that THOMAS was working and living in the Atlanta area at least since April of 2005, and was residing with his girlfriend and her family in Doraville, Georgia at the time Hurricane Katrina made landfall.

EDWARDS was named in a three-count indictment returned on December 6, 2005 that charged him with crimes related to fraudulently obtaining emergency assistance from

FEMA. EDWARDS pleaded guilty today to all three counts of the Indictment, which charged him with mail fraud, filing false claims, and theft of FEMA funds, respectively. As a result of his guilty plea, he could receive a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000.

THOMAS was named in a five-count indictment issued on the same date, which charged him with mail fraud, filing a false claim, and theft of FEMA funds. THOMAS pleaded guilty today to Count One of the indictment, which charged him with using the mail to execute his scheme to defraud FEMA. As a result of his guilty plea, he could receive a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison and a fine up to \$250,000.

Sentencing for EDWARDS is scheduled for May 22, 2006, at 10:30 a.m., before United States District Judge Beverly B. Martin. Sentencing for THOMAS is scheduled for May 25, 2006, at 10:30 a.m., before United States District Judge Charles A. Pannell.

These cases are being investigated by the special agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of the Inspector General.

Assistant United States Attorney BJay Pak is prosecuting the cases.

For further information please contact David E. Nahmias (pronounced NAH-me-us), United States Attorney or William L. McKinnon, Chief, Economic Crime and Cybercrime, through Patrick Crosby, Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Attorney's Office, at (404) 581-6016. The Internet address for the HomePage for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia is [www.usdoj.gov/usao/gan](http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/gan).