



Department of Justice

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ANOTHER GUILTY PLEA TO KATRINA FRAUD

Jackson, Mississippi - United States Attorney Dunn Lampton announced today that **Tommy Touchstone**, of Purvis, Mississippi has entered a guilty plea to making a false statement to the United States Department of Agriculture, Farm Service Agency.

In pleading guilty, **Touchstone** admitted that he made a false statement to the Farm Service Agency for reimbursement monies he claimed through the Emergency Conservation Program. **Touchstone** received \$10,105 from the Emergency Conservation Program by providing false and fraudulent invoices for fence repair, bulldozer clearing, and labor on his farm. **Touchstone** admitted that the work was never done although he represented to the Farm Service Agency it was completed. The Emergency Conservation Program was set up to help land owners repair fences and agricultural lands that were damaged due to Hurricane Katrina.

Tommy Touchstone is to be sentenced before U.S. District Judge Keith Starrett. on March 1, 2006 at 10:45 a.m. The maximum sentence for Tommy Touchstone is 5 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

In September, 2005, Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales created the national 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 for the Criminal Division, Alice S. Fisher, includes members from the FBI, the Federal Trade Commission, the Department of Labor Office of Inspector General, the Postal Inspector's Office and the Executive Office of United States Attorneys, among others.

Pursuant to the Justice Department initiative, a local Katrina Fraud Task Force, consisting of over 20 Federal and State law enforcement agencies, was formed in the Southern District of Mississippi to pursue and prosecute individuals who engage in fraud associated with the hurricanes.

If anyone has information concerning possible fraud being committed during the post-Katrina recovery effort, please call either the DHS-OIG Fraud Hotline at 1-866-720-5721 or the FBI Fraud Hotline at 1-800-225-5324.

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