



Department of Justice

**United States Attorney Dunn Lampton
Southern District of Mississippi**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
TUESDAY, AUGUST 8, 2006
www.usdoj.gov/usao/mss/

188 EAST CAPITOL STREET
ONE JACKSON PLACE, STE 500
TEL: (601) 965-4480
FAX: (601) 965-4409

GULFPORT RESIDENT PLEADS GUILTY TO KATRINA FRAUD

DUNN LAMPTON, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Mississippi, announced that Shera Sims, of Gulfport, Mississippi, entered a guilty plea in federal court on Monday to presenting a false claim for payment of disaster unemployment benefits funded by the U.S. Department of Labor in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

As alleged in the indictment, Shera Sims claimed she was unemployed because of Hurricane Katrina and that her last date of employment was August 28, 2005. In fact, defendant SIMS was employed by and received wages from Burger King in Gulfport from August 27, 2005, through November 4, 2005. SIMS received a total of \$2,268 as a result of her disaster unemployment claim. Sims faces a maximum sentence of five years imprisonment, and a \$250,000 fine.

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 Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force - chaired by Assistant Attorney General Alice S. Fisher of the Criminal Division - includes members from the FBI, the Federal Trade Commission, 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 17 Federal and State law enforcement agencies, was formed in the Southern District of Mississippi to pursue and prosecute individuals who file false and fraudulent claims.

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.

###