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November 20, 2012
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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FEMA EMPLOYEE PLEADS GUILTY TO EMBEZZLING OVER \$143,000

Greenbelt, Maryland - Sheila Ann Howard, age 56, of Capitol Heights, Maryland, pleaded guilty today to embezzling over \$143,000 from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

The guilty plea was announced by United States Attorney for the District of Maryland Rod J. Rosenstein and Special Agent in Charge Michael Dawson of the Department of Homeland Security - Office of Inspector General, Washington Field Office.

According to her plea agreement, Sheila Howard began working at FEMA in 1986 and beginning in June 2008 was employed as a Human Resources Specialist. As part of her responsibilities, Howard processed payments through FEMA's Special Payroll Processing System, which handles payments that cannot be processed through the normal payroll system, such as cash awards and special bonuses, compensatory time payments and restored annual leave. Howard admits that between December 7, 2009 and March 31, 2011, she processed 28 fraudulent payments, totaling \$143,414.39, in the names of 18 former FEMA employees, and one current FEMA employee. The payments were purportedly for compensatory time, restored annual leave, or cash awards and special bonuses. Each of these payments was deposited into one of four bank accounts associated with Howard. The FEMA employees were not aware of Howard's misuse of their names and other personal identification information in order to conduct the scheme.

Howard faces a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison and a fine of \$250,000. U.S. District Judge Peter J. Messitte has scheduled sentencing for February 1, 2013.

United States Attorney Rod J. Rosenstein praised DHS Office of Inspector General for its work in the investigation. Mr. Rosenstein thanked Assistant U.S. Attorney Hollis Weisman, who is prosecuting the case.