



Department of Justice

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PICKENS WOMAN FOUND GUILTY OF FEMA FRAUD

Jackson, Miss - On January 10, 2014, after a four day trial, a federal jury found Idella Jones, 47, of Pickens, guilty of theft of government funds, making a false statement, filing a false claim against the United States and disaster relief fraud, announced U.S. Attorney Gregory K. Davis and James E. Ward, Special Agent in Charge of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General.

Jones was indicted for claiming and receiving FEMA disaster relief benefits as a result of tornado damage to a mobile home located in Holmes County, Mississippi. According to the evidence at trial, Jones had moved away from the mobile home in early 1998 but when a tornado destroyed it in 2010, she claimed to have been living there with three of her children. As a result of her false claim, she was paid \$29,900 by FEMA to cover rent and a replacement mobile home.

"Whenever a natural disaster strikes, there will always be people willing to take advantage of victim assistance and rebuilding efforts," said U.S. Attorney Gregory K. Davis. "Those who would try to illegally profit from disasters should know that the United States Attorney's Office will continue its aggressive prosecution of disaster fraud."

Homeland Security OIG Special Agent in Charge James E. Ward said: "We all suffer when federal programs are undermined by fraud. Today's conviction should send a clear message that we will continue to identify and prosecute these shameful individuals who attempt to abuse our federal resources and programs. The DHS OIG appreciates the assistance and partnership from USDA OIG and this United States Attorney's Office in pursuing this case. In the future, this office will remain vigilant in seeking prosecutions in such cases to uphold the integrity of our Federal Emergency Programs, which are intended for law abiding citizens."

Jones will be sentenced on March 21, 2013 by U.S. District Judge Henry T. Wingate. She faces a maximum penalty of ten years in prison for theft of government funds, ten years for filing a false claim, five years for making a false statement and thirty years for disaster relief fraud.

This case was investigated by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General, with assistance from the Federal Bureau of Investigation and USDA Office of Inspector General. It was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Scott Gilbert.