



*United States Attorney  
District of New Jersey*

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**FEMA CONTRACTOR ADMITS ILLEGALLY ACCEPTING GRATUITY  
FROM VICTIM OF HURRICANE IRENE**

NEWARK, N.J. – A Texas woman working as a contractor for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (“FEMA”) admitted today that she demanded and received an illegal gratuity from a New Jersey resident who had applied for FEMA assistance for property damaged by Hurricane Irene, U.S. Attorney Paul J. Fishman announced.

Tara Fannin-Mark, a/k/a Tara Mark, 44, of Houston, Texas, pleaded guilty before U.S. District Judge Jose L. Linares in Newark federal court to an Information charging her with one count of receipt of an illegal gratuity by a public official.

According to documents filed in this case and statements made in court:

Fannin-Mark was employed as an inspector by a company that had entered into a contract with FEMA to inspect property belonging to individuals who sought FEMA assistance for damage caused by natural disasters. Fannin-Mark was assigned to conduct inspections of houses and other property of New Jersey residents who had applied for FEMA disaster assistance for damage caused by Hurricane Irene, which struck New Jersey in August 2011.

On Oct. 26, 2011, after a person listed in the information as a “Cooperating Witness” had initiated a request for FEMA disaster assistance, Fannin-Mark conducted an inspection at the Cooperating Witness’s residence in Essex County, N.J. On Oct. 31, 2011, having been informed that the Cooperating Witness had received a \$2,313 disaster assistance check from FEMA, Fannin-Mark told the Cooperating Witness that Fannin-Mark needed \$230 of the FEMA payment. Fannin-Mark received the \$230 illegal gratuity from the Cooperating Witness in early November 2011.

The count to which Fannin-Mark pleaded guilty is punishable by a maximum potential penalty of two years in prison. Sentencing is scheduled for July 9, 2013.

U.S. Attorney Fishman credited the Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Gregory Null, with the investigation leading to today’s guilty plea.

The government is represented by Senior Litigation Counsel J Fortier Imbert of the U.S. Attorney's Office Special Prosecutions Division Newark.

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Defense counsel: André Ligon Esq., Houston, Texas