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Northern District of Oklahoma

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, May 2, 2014

Mannford Woman Guilty Of Fraudulently Receiving Over \$30,000 In Disaster Relief

TULSA, Okla. — United States Attorney Danny C. Williams Sr. announced today that a Mannford woman had pleaded guilty in federal court to fraudulently obtaining Federal Emergency Disaster Agency (FEMA) disaster assistance benefits made available to victims of the Mannford wildfires.

Kerry Lynn Rowell, 42, of Mannford, pleaded guilty before United States District Court Chief Judge Gregory K. Frizzell to a charge that she had made false statements to a Federal agency. Rowell faces the maximum statutory penalty of five (5) years imprisonment and a fine of \$250,000. A sentencing date has been set for August 12, 2014.

According to court documents, from August 23, 2012 to September 23, 2013, Rowell made false statements and provided false documents to support her application for FEMA disaster assistance. Rowell claimed her primary residence was destroyed, when in fact she did not reside at that residence. The house was actually owned by her mother and was uninhabited, dilapidated, and had no utility service. None of the personal property she listed on the FEMA application was in the abandoned house when it was destroyed by the fire. Rowell fraudulently received \$31,400 in FEMA disaster assistance benefits.

“Anyone with information that an individual may have defrauded the government in connection with a disaster may call the toll-free Department of Homeland Security’s Office of Inspector General Hotline at 1-800-323-8603,” said U.S. Attorney Williams. “Complaints may be made anonymously and confidentially via the official website (www.oig.dhs.gov), or by mailing DHS Office of Inspector General/MAIL STOP 0305, Attention: Office of Investigations—Hotline, 245 Murray Lane SW, Washington, DC 20528.”

The case was investigated by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Office of the Inspector General and the United States Secret Service. Assistant United States Attorney Charles M. McLoughlin prosecuted on behalf of the United States.

If someone has any questions about how assistance benefits may be spent, has made a mistake when reporting damage, or has misrepresented losses, he or she may correct the situation immediately by calling the toll-free FEMA Helpline at 1-800-621-FEMA or 1-800-462-7585 (TTY) for the speech or hearing impaired.

USAO - Oklahoma, Northern

Updated July 14, 2015