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**HURRICANE KATRINA DISASTER RELIEF OPERATOR PLEADS GUILTY TO  
EMBEZZLING \$96,000 IN DISASTER RELIEF FUNDS**

*Greenbelt*, Maryland - Deborah McDaniel, age 47, of Silver Spring, Maryland, pleaded guilty today to conspiracy to embezzle \$96,000 in Hurricane Katrina disaster relief benefits, announced United States Attorney for the District of Maryland Rod J. Rosenstein.

According to the plea agreement, shortly after Hurricane Katrina made landfall in August 2005, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) created a program by which victims of Hurricane Katrina could apply by telephone to receive \$2,000 in disaster relief benefits that would be wired to the victim's bank account. In September 2005 McDaniel was hired by a FEMA subcontractor as a call center operator responsible for processing claims from victims of Hurricane Katrina. McDaniel was responsible for answering a phone line set up for victims of Hurricane Katrina and putting the victims' names, addresses and banking information into FEMA computers so that disaster relief benefits could be sent to them. McDaniel input false names and addresses of alleged victims into the FEMA computer and designated the bank accounts of her co-conspirators as the recipients of the funds, even though they were not entitled to Hurricane Katrina disaster relief benefits. After receiving the disaster relief funds, the co-conspirators gave a portion of the money to McDaniel. In September 2005, McDaniel submitted claims for \$96,000 in Hurricane Katrina disaster relief benefits to be deposited into her co-conspirators' bank accounts.

McDaniel faces a maximum sentence of five years in prison, followed by three years of supervised release. U.S. District Judge Deborah K. Chasanow has scheduled sentencing for March 16, 2009 at 11:00 a.m.

United States Attorney Rod J. Rosenstein thanked the United States Secret Service and the Department of Homeland Security - Office of Inspector General for their investigative work. Mr. Rosenstein commended Assistant United States Attorney Jonathan Su, who is prosecuting the case.