

U.S. Department of Justice
United States Attorney
Southern District of Florida
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October 7, 2005

NEWS RELEASE:

**NINE BROWARD COUNTY RESIDENTS ARRESTED AND
CHARGED WITH HURRICANE FRANCES FEMA FRAUD**

R. Alexander Acosta, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Florida, and Donald J. Balberchak, Special Agent In Charge, Department of Homeland Security, Office of the Inspector General, Miami Field Office, announced today the arrests of nine (9) Broward County residents who were Indicted for defrauding the Federal Emergency Assistance Agency, Department of Homeland Security (FEMA), to obtain disaster relief after last year's Hurricane Frances. Arrested today were defendants, **Siandra Lekitia Elick, Jiquana S. Heath, Maryse Dubuisson, Felicia Benita Johnson, Themecia Maria Couch, Lakrisha Rumore Ayden, Tamela Humes, Chenita Arnella Wiggins, and Valerie Rodney.**

FEMA is the agency responsible for, among other things, providing disaster assistance to individuals in areas declared to be a major disaster. FEMA was authorized to provide disaster assistance to Florida victims of Hurricane Francis under its Individuals and Households Program. This program provided financial and other assistance to those who suffered property losses and damage from Hurricane Francis, which made landfall on September 5, 2004, near Sewall's Point, Martin County, Florida.

Each defendant was separately charged in a one count Indictment with making false claims to FEMA, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 287. If convicted, the defendants face maximum statutory penalties of 5 years' imprisonment as to each false claim count. The Indictments allege that each defendant falsely represented to FEMA that he/she had sustained personal property damage during Hurricane Frances. Based on these false representations and claims, each defendant received FEMA disaster relief assistance in the following approximate amounts:

Siandra Lekitia Elick: \$7,832.16.

Jiquana Heath: \$10,782.29.

Maryse Dubuisson: \$6,293.03.

Felicia Benita Johnson: \$9,476.07.

Themecia Maria Couch: \$3,224.41.

Lakrisha Rumore Ayden: \$10,234.07.

Tamela Humes: \$11,109.23.

Chenita Arnella Wiggins: \$7,077.02.

Valerie Rodney: \$7,301.09.

Mr. Acosta commended the investigative efforts of the Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General. To report FEMA fraud, please call the FEMA Hotline at 1-800-720-5721. These cases are being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Laurie E. Rucoba and Jennifer Keene.