



**Homeland
Security**

PRESS RELEASE

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DHS INSPECTOR GENERAL ANNOUNCES HURRICANE RELIEF FRAUD HOTLINE

Experience and history has shown that disasters such as Hurricane Katrina bring out the best and worst in people. Regrettably, there will always be those who will seek to profit from the tragedy of others.

The government has responded through various funding programs making money available to those who have been displaced and dispossessed by the hurricane. The public has a right to expect that those funds will be dispersed to those truly in need. Opportunistic crimes will not be tolerated.

Investigations have begun. Through computer databases, informant tips, and hotline tips, we are receiving information of fraudulent claims. Those who have made such claims, whether to FEMA or any other government entity, should take stock in their situation and seriously consider withdrawing their claims or voluntarily returning monies already disbursed to them. Prosecution of fraud cases is brought by the United States Department of Justice. Theft of government property or claiming false disaster losses are felony charges and carry a maximum ten year prison term and/or a \$250,000 fine.

Teams of special agents from several Offices of Inspector General will carry out the investigations. Some of the Offices of Inspectors General who are addressing fraud, waste, and abuse in the Gulf region are:

- The Department of Homeland Security
- The Department of Defense
- The Department of Agriculture
- The Environmental Protection Agency
- The General Services Administration
- The Department of Health and Human Services
- The Department of Housing and Urban Development
- The Department of Transportation
- The Department of Labor

Anyone who is aware of criminal activity involving disaster assistance programs can anonymously report it by calling the toll-free **Hurricane Relief Fraud Hotline at 1-866-720-5721**. The Hotline will be in operation 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

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