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Three Charged With FEMA Fraud During LA Wildfire Recovery

LOS ANGELES – Two men from Los Angeles and a woman from Louisiana have been charged with falsely claiming they were residents of Altadena and the Pacific Palisades and fraudulently obtaining more than \$40,000 in disaster assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency intended for victims of the January 2025 Los Angeles County wildfires.

“When you choose to steal FEMA wildfire relief funds, you are stealing from the thousands of fire victims who desperately need financial assistance rebuilding their homes and their lives,” Los Angeles County District Attorney Nathan J. Hochman said. “As a lifelong Angeleno and your District Attorney, I will not stand for criminals selfishly profiting from someone else’s loss. If you pretend to be a wildfire victim, we will find you. If you think you can hide behind the internet, our Cyber Crime Division will be right behind you. Whether you reside in Los Angeles or elsewhere in the United States, FEMA fraud will not go unpunished.”

Jerry Lee Clay Jr. (dob 5/19/82) of Los Angeles is charged in case 25CJCF05331 with one felony count of procuring and offering a false or forged instrument; one felony count of grand theft; and two felony counts of unauthorized use of personal identifying information.

Clay allegedly submitted a fraudulent FEMA application using a Pacific Palisades residence at which he did not live and an apartment number that does not exist, ultimately stealing \$14,919.30 in federal disaster assistance in January and February 2025. The funds were deposited into his personal account and used for purposes unrelated to the federal disaster claims. He is also accused of impersonating individuals he falsely claimed were his landlords in documents submitted to FEMA to verify tenancy claims and further his scheme.

Clay was arrested on Sept. 14 and arraigned on Sept. 16. He pleaded not guilty to all charges. The Court set bail at \$50,000 and Clay was released on bond. A preliminary hearing is set for Sept. 30 in Department 31 of the Foltz Criminal Justice Center. If convicted as charged, Clay faces four years and four months in state prison.

Matthew Garnet O’Brien (6/9/81) of Los Angeles is charged in case 25CJCF05780 with one felony count of offering a forged or false instrument and one felony count of grand theft.

O'Brien is accused of stealing \$12,314.52 from FEMA in January and February 2025 after submitting a fraudulent FEMA application misrepresenting his residential address as a home in Altadena. The funds were deposited into his personal accounts and used for purposes unrelated to the federal disaster claims.

O'Brien surrendered to law enforcement on Sept. 25. He was released on his own recognizance. His arraignment is set for Nov. 25 in Department 30 of the Foltz Criminal Justice Center. If convicted as charged, O'Brien faces three years in state prison.

Maricka Marie Gilmore (7/15/88) of Marrero, La., is charged in case 25CJCF05310 with one felony count each of procuring and offering a false or forged instrument and grand theft.

Gilmore allegedly submitted a FEMA application using a Pacific Palisades residence at which she did not live and an apartment number that does not exist. She is accused of stealing \$14,153.67 from FEMA in February 2025. The funds were deposited into her personal account and used for purposes unrelated to the federal disaster claims.

Gilmore was extradited from Louisiana to Los Angeles on Sept. 23 and is being held on \$50,000 bail. Arraignment is set for today in Department 30 of the Foltz Criminal Justice Center. If convicted as charged, Gilmore faces three years in state prison.

The three felony complaints were filed for warrant on Aug. 21. The cases are being prosecuted by Deputy District Attorney Benyomin Forer of the Cyber Crime Division and remain under investigation by the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office Bureau of Investigation.

The charges filed in this case are allegations. The defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty in a court of law.