



THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
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Eastern District of California

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Siskiyou County Man Charged with Major Fraud Against the United States for Taking FEMA Grant Funds

Grant Administrator Misused over \$500,000 Intended for Recruiting and Training New Firefighters

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Samuel Thomas Lanier, 40, of Dunsmuir, was charged today with seven counts of major fraud against the United States, U.S. Attorney McGregor W. Scott announced.

According to court documents, from approximately June 2013 to March 2018, Lanier engaged in a scheme to defraud the United States by submitting, or causing to be submitted, false reimbursement requests to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in connection with federal grants awarded to Siskiyou and Shasta County Fire Chiefs Associations to assist them in recruiting and training new firefighters.

In June 2013 and June 2014, respectively, the Siskiyou and Shasta County Fire Chiefs Associations were awarded grants as part of the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) program. Each grant was over \$1 million. The purpose of these grants was to assure that communities have adequate protection from fire-related hazards, and to help the recipients attain and maintain 24-hour staffing.

Lanier, as an owner or executive of two companies located in Dunsmuir, was hired by the Fire Chiefs Associations to administer these grants. In this capacity, Lanier knowingly submitted to FEMA false and fraudulent reimbursement requests, seeking and obtaining reimbursement for goods and services that were not, in fact, actually obtained on behalf of the fire associations. In so doing, Lanier caused a gross loss to the United States of over \$500,000.

This case is the product of an investigation by the Major Frauds & Corruption Unit of the Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General. Assistant U.S. Attorney Amy Schuller Hitchcock is prosecuting the case.

“The Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Office of Inspector General (OIG) in partnership with the Department of Justice is committed to identifying and investigating fraud schemes and corrupt activities that pose significant risk and major financial impact to DHS and its components, including FEMA. This fraud scheme siphoned vital funds from a federal program that supports local fire departments to serve their communities,” said James E. Long, Special Agent in Charge, Major Frauds and Corruption Unit, DHS OIG. “Fraud perpetrated against FEMA is detrimental to our nation’s infrastructure and safety, especially from programs that support front line firefighters and first responders.”

Lanier has agreed to plead guilty to the charges. He faces a maximum statutory penalty of 10 years in prison and a \$10 million fine. The actual sentence, however, will be determined at the discretion of the court after consideration of any applicable statutory factors and the Federal Sentencing Guidelines, which take into account a number of variables.

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