

THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
EASTERN DISTRICT *of* CALIFORNIA

[U.S. Attorneys](#) » [Eastern District of California](#) » [News](#)

Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

Eastern District of California

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, April 18, 2022

Former Butte County Man Pleads Guilty to Theft of FEMA Benefits in Connection with Paradise Camp Fire

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Andrew Keffer, 44, previously of Chico, pleaded guilty today to theft of government property: specifically, FEMA benefits issued in connection with the 2018 Camp Fire, U.S. Attorney Phillip A. Talbert announced.

Following the 2018 Camp and Carr Fires, FEMA assistance was available to individuals who, as a result of the fires, had emergency needs for food, shelter, and personal items. To qualify for certain benefits, an individual's primary residence—the place where the individual resided at the time of the fire—had to have been destroyed or damaged by the fire, among other eligibility criteria.

According to court documents, FEMA issued two checks to Keffer based on an application for FEMA benefits that falsely claimed Keffer's primary residence had been destroyed in the Camp Fire. Keffer cashed the two checks knowing he was not a victim of the Camp Fire and was not entitled to the money. This case came to the attention of federal law enforcement through a tip from a member of the public.

This case is the result of investigations by the Department of Homeland Security, Office of the Inspector General with assistance from the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Assistant U.S. Attorney Shelley D. Weger is prosecuting the case.

Keffer is scheduled to be sentenced by U.S. District Judge William B. Shubb on Aug. 15, 2022. Keffer faces a maximum statutory penalty of 10 years in prison and a \$250,000 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. The charges are only allegations; the defendants are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

The U.S. Department of Justice established the National Center for Disaster Fraud (NCDF) to investigate, prosecute, and deter fraud in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, when billions of dollars in federal disaster relief poured into the Gulf Coast region. Its mission has expanded to include suspected fraud from any natural or manmade disaster. More than 20 federal, state, and local agencies participate in the NCDF, which allows the center to act as a centralized clearinghouse of information related to disaster relief fraud.

Topic(s):

Disaster Fraud

Component(s):

USAO - California, Eastern

Updated April 18, 2022