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Eastern District of California

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, July 25, 2022

Magalia Resident Sentenced to 12 Months in Prison for \$77,000 FEMA Fraud in Connection with the Paradise Camp Fire

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — U.S. District Judge William B. Shubb sentenced Deborah Laughlin, 66, of Magalia, today to 12 months in prison and ordered to pay \$77,249 in restitution for making false statements in an application for FEMA benefits in connection with the 2018 Paradise Camp Fire, U.S. Attorney Phillip A. Talbert announced.

According to court documents, FEMA provided disaster benefits to certain qualified individuals whose primary residence was damaged or destroyed in the Camp Fire. On Nov. 15, 2018, Laughlin falsely claimed a mobile home at 7209 Skyway in Paradise as her primary residence at the time of the Camp Fire. In fact, at the time of the Camp Fire, other individuals were renting and residing in the mobile home located at this address. Based on her false statement, she received \$7,886 to replace essential items damaged by the disaster and \$1,788 for two months of rental assistance. In addition, Laughlin received temporary housing from FEMA in a manufactured home from approximately June 2019 until April 2021. The money and housing Laughlin received caused an actual loss to the United States of at least \$77,249.

This case was the product of an investigation 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 prosecuted the case.

Members of the public who suspect fraud involving disaster relief efforts, including California wildfires or COVID-19 relief efforts, or who believe they have been a victim of fraud from a person or organization soliciting relief funds on behalf of disaster victims, should contact the National Disaster Fraud Hotline toll free at (866) 720-5721. Alternatively, information can be submitted via email to DHSOIGHotline@dhs.gov.

Topic(s):

Disaster Fraud

Component(s):

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