



PRESS RELEASE

## Westbrook Woman Sentenced for Role in Money Mule Scam, Ordered to Pay FEMA \$7,340 in Restitution

Monday, April 3, 2023

### For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Maine

PORTLAND, Maine: A Westbrook woman was sentenced in U.S. District Court in Portland for serving as a “money mule” for someone she met online. A money mule is someone who transfers or moves illegally acquired money on behalf of someone else.

Chief U.S. District Judge Jon D. Levy sentenced Cheryl White, 58, to three years of probation. She was also ordered to pay \$7,340 in restitution to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). White pleaded guilty on May 19, 2022.

According to court records, White met an unknown person on the internet. At their request, White purchased prepaid debit cards and provided the card numbers to the person. She was later contacted by the person and informed that the cards had been loaded with money. In October 2017, White withdrew the money from the cards and used the funds to purchase money orders which she deposited into her bank account. She withdrew the money days later and mailed most of the money to an address provided by the person she met online.

The money loaded onto the prepaid cards came from FEMA, which had issued the money based on false and fraudulent claims for disaster relief filed with the agency. Although White did not file the false claims, she admitted that she knew the money came from some type of crime. Two banks had previously closed her accounts due to similar conduct, with one bank informing her that her deposits and withdrawals were part of a fraud scheme. White nonetheless continued the same conduct.

The Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General (DHS OIG) investigated the case with assistance from FEMA’s Fraud Prevention and Investigations Branch and the Westbrook Police Department.

Money Mule Scams: Acting as a money mule is illegal and punishable even if you aren’t aware that you are committing a crime. If you are a money mule, you could be prosecuted and incarcerated as part of a criminal money laundering conspiracy. Some money mules know they are supporting criminal enterprises; others are unaware that they are helping criminals profit. Criminals often target students, those looking for work, or those on dating websites, but anyone can be approached to be a money mule. Learn more about money mule scams at <https://www.fbi.gov/scams-and-safety/common-scams-and-crimes/money-mules>.