



**UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE**  
*Southern District of New York*

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**DISASTER RELIEF CONSULTANT PLEADS GUILTY TO FRAUD IN  
CONNECTION WITH NEW YORK CITY'S HURRICANE SANDY  
RECOVERY EFFORTS**

Damian Williams, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, and Jocelyn E. Strauber, the Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation ("DOI"), announced that MARK O'MARA, a disaster relief consultant, pled guilty to fraud in connection with his work for an Illinois-based consulting firm ("Company-1") that provided Hurricane Sandy-related recovery services to the City of New York. O'MARA surrendered today and pled guilty before U.S. District Judge Richard M. Berman in federal court in Manhattan. O'MARA is the second Company-1 employee to plead guilty in recent months to fraud related to Hurricane Sandy relief work, as WALTER MELNICK previously pled guilty in a separate case assigned to U.S. District Judge Victor Marrero.

U.S. Attorney Damian Williams said: "Instead of helping New York City recover from the devastation of Hurricane Sandy, Mark O'Mara helped himself by fraudulently obtaining housing benefits to which he was not entitled. I commend the Department of Investigation and this Office for holding to account those who conspire to defraud invaluable federal programs."

DOI Commissioner Jocelyn E. Strauber said: "This defendant used Hurricane Sandy as an opportunity for personal profit, through a scheme to pocket federal relief funds intended to help New Yorkers rebuild from this disaster. Today, he takes responsibility for that conduct, pleading guilty to federal offenses, including destroying evidence, and agreeing to repay the City nearly \$225,000, forfeit over a quarter-million dollars, and pay any past-due taxes. DOI and our law enforcement partners in the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York are committed to stopping frauds that drain public resources and holding accountable those who participate."

According to the allegations in the Information, court filings, and statements made in court:

Beginning in or about 2013, in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy, the City of New York (the "City") received billions of dollars in federal money to fund Hurricane Sandy-related recovery efforts. The City used certain of these funds to hire Company-1 to assist with Hurricane Sandy relief (the "Sandy Project"). Company-1 hired O'MARA to work on the Sandy Project.

Between at least in or about 2013 and in or about 2019, while working for Company-1, O'MARA submitted fraudulent information and documents, including a fraudulent lease agreement, to the New York City Office of Management and Budget ("NYC-OMB") via Company-1 in order to obtain lodging reimbursements from the City to which he knew he was not entitled. Between in or

about 2017 and in or about 2019, O'MARA also conspired with others – including another consultant at Company-1, WALTER MELNICK – to defraud the City by falsely claiming that he was residing in an apartment purchased by an individual at MELNICK's direction. O'MARA fraudulently obtained more than approximately \$250,000 from the City via Company-1 as a result of these schemes.

Additionally, in or about February 2020, when the City began raising concerns about Company-1's travel reimbursements, O'MARA destroyed relevant emails and other communications to cover up the fraud.

MELNICK previously pled guilty in a separate case to conspiring to commit federal program fraud while working for Company-1 on the Sandy Project for fraudulently obtaining housing reimbursements based on a fake lease and other fraudulent documentation. MELNICK agreed to pay \$387,749 in forfeiture and restitution. MELNICK is scheduled to be sentenced by Judge Marrero on February 24, 2023.

O'MARA is cooperating with the Government.

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MARK O'MARA, 41, of New York, New York, pled guilty to one count of federal program fraud, which carries a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison; one count of wire fraud in connection with a presidentially-declared major disaster, which carries a maximum sentence of 30 years in prison; one count of conspiracy to commit federal program fraud and wire fraud, which carries a maximum sentence of five years in prison; and one count of destruction of evidence, which carries a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison. Under the terms of his plea agreement, O'MARA agreed to forfeit \$258,900 and to pay restitution to NYC-OMB in the amount of \$224,687.26.

The maximum potential sentences in this case are prescribed by Congress and are provided here for informational purposes only, as any sentencing of the defendant would be determined by a judge.

Mr. Williams praised the outstanding investigative work of DOI.

This matter is being handled by the Office's Public Corruption Unit. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Jane Kim and Catherine Ghosh are in charge of the prosecution.

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