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82

Posted September 13, 2017 03:42 pm | Updated September 13, 2017 04:05 pm

By Andrew Pantazi (/authors/andrew-pantazi)

State Attorney Melissa Nelson announces hotline, plans to prosecute Irma-related crimes



State Attorney Melissa Nelson announced a new hotline dedicated to prosecuting storm-related crimes. State Attorney Melissa Nelson announced a new hotline dedicated to prosecuting storm-related crimes.

State Attorney Melissa Nelson announced a new hotline Wednesday to address crime related to Hurricane Irma, and she dedicated two of her top prosecutors, along with herself, to address the cases.

Chief Assistant State Attorney Leh Hutton will handle cases in Nassau and Clay counties, special prosecutor Joe Licandro will handle Duval cases, and Nelson herself will oversee the prosecutions. The office will re-open Thursday.

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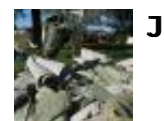
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Hutton usually oversees juvenile cases, the two outlying counties and misdemeanor prosecutions, while Licandro specializes in prosecuting white-collar cases.

This isn't the first time the office has set up a dedicated hotline. Not long after taking office this year, Nelson also dedicated a special hotline for its human-rights division, which prosecutes police brutality, elder abuse, human trafficking and hate crimes. That same hotline — 904-255-3099 — will now be used for storm-related crimes.

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(<http://jacksonville.com/news/metro/2017-09-08/northeast-florida-joins-exodus-braces-irma-s-impact>)

The crimes she is prioritizing include burglaries, fraud, exploitation and "other related crimes of opportunity that particularly occurred during the declared state of emergency that began Friday, Sept. 8, and ended Tuesday, Sept. 12," the news release said.

"During times of emergency, such crimes against the vulnerable cannot be tolerated," Nelson said in the news release.

Nelson is not alone in prioritizing hurricane-related crimes. Harris County's district attorney, Kim Ogg, also said she was prioritizing prosecuting looting in Houston after Hurricane Harvey wrecked the city. And acting United States Attorney Stephen Muldrow established a disaster fraud task force to prosecute federal crimes in the middle district of Florida, which includes Jacksonville, Tampa, Orlando and Fort Myers.

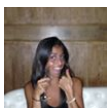
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"We will aggressively investigate and prosecute anyone who seeks to defraud or exploit the federal assistance programs established to help individuals, families, or businesses that have lost so much as a result of Hurricane Irma," Muldrow said. "Our office will continue to protect the rights of our honest citizens affected by this disaster and ensure that they receive the necessary public and charitable assistance they deserve."

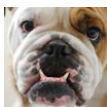
The National Disaster Fraud Hotline is 866-720-5721.

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John Derrick

Is Ms Nelson going to prosecute JEA for having NO WAY to report downed power lines? They say call 630CITY, that transfers you to JEA, which plays recording saying that they are very aware of the outages and then just hangs up! The downed power lines are still down.

JEA claims all year long that downed lines are a hazard. Now that there are downed lines, they make it impossible to report a downed line and they ignore reports of outages, just says, even 3 and 4 days later, that they are "assessing" but that the reports are "unassigned." That is not service, that is criminal negligence.

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