

Office of the State Attorney  
Fourth Judicial Circuit of Florida  
www.sao4th.com



311 West Monroe Street  
Jacksonville, Florida 32202-4242  
Tel: (904) 255-2500

MELISSA W. NELSON  
STATE ATTORNEY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: David Chapman

Phone: (904) 255-3004

Cell: (904) 524-6626

[ChapmanD@coj.net](mailto:ChapmanD@coj.net)

Sept. 13, 2017

## LAW ENFORCEMENT, STATE ATTORNEY TAKING STORM-RELATED CRIMES SERIOUSLY

As Northeast Florida continues to rebuild and regroup following Hurricane Irma, law enforcement in Duval, Clay, and Nassau counties are partnering with the Fourth Circuit State Attorney's Office to enhance efforts to arrest and prosecute individuals who used the storm as a backdrop to commit crimes of opportunity.

"At a time when most in our community have rallied to help one another during and after this devastating storm, it is appalling that a few would use it as an opportunity to victimize our neighbors," said State Attorney Melissa Nelson.

Such crimes 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. These are the days that preceded and succeeded the powerful storm that crippled parts of the region and impacted almost every county in Florida. Investigators will review cases to determine which crimes would fall under these categories and the State Attorney's Office will fully pursue storm-related sentencing enhancements when applicable.

"Sheriff Daniels, Leeper, and I stand together with State Attorney Nelson to remind those who prey on others — especially as we work to dig out from Hurricane Irma — that these criminal acts are intolerable and justice will be delivered for the victims," said Sheriff Mike Williams.

Anyone in Duval, Clay, or Nassau county who suspects they have been the victim of a storm-related crime is strongly encouraged to call the State Attorney's Office Human Rights Division hotline at (904) 255-3099, or use the electronic form at the office's [sao4th.com](http://sao4th.com) website to report these actions.

Nelson has assigned veteran attorneys in the office to handle these cases and she will personally oversee the prosecution of those crimes.

"During times of emergency, such crimes against the vulnerable cannot be tolerated," she said.

