

# LAW & JUSTICE

## Mail Key Theft Arrest

Police arrested a man Friday in the theft of mailbox keys and stolen identities.

Joe Vincent Johansen, 29, faces two felony theft charges and a parole violation. He's accused in connection with the theft of postal box locks to mail drop off boxes keys and mail that were found in



Joe Johansen

a Northeast Killingsworth Street apartment.

Portland Police Detectives and the U.S. Postal Inspector led the investigation.

The mailbox key thefts required a complete change of locks to mail drop off boxes throughout the city.

## Minorities Get Few Katrina Contracts

### Most go to businesses with connections

(AP) — Minority-owned businesses say they're paying the price for the decision by Congress and the Bush administration to waive certain rules for Hurricane Katrina recovery contracts.

About 1.5 percent of the \$1.6 billion awarded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency has gone to minority businesses, less than a third of the 5 percent normally required.

Sen. Olympia J. Snowe, R-Maine, and Rep. Donald A. Manzullo, R-Ill., have asked the Government Accountability Office to investigate whether small and minority-owned businesses have been given a fair opportunity to compete for Katrina contracts.

Andrew Jenkins doesn't think so. Once Katrina's destructive waters receded, he began making calls in hopes of a winning government contract for his Mississippi construction company.

Jenkins, who is black, says he watched in frustration as the contracts went to others, many of them larger, white-owned companies with political ties to Washington.

"That just doesn't smell right," said Jenkins, president of AJA Management and Technical Services Inc. of Jackson, Miss., noting the region has a higher percentage of blacks and minority-owned businesses than other areas of the country.

To speed aid, many requirements normally attached to government contracting were waived by Congress and the administration.

The result has been far more no-bid contracts going to businesses that have an existing relationship with the government.

There also was an easing of affirmative action rules for contractors and a suspension of a "prevailing wage" law that black lawmakers and business people believe will hurt the disproportionately large number of black hourly workers in the region.

"It sends a bad message," said Harry Alford, president of the National Black Chamber of Commerce. "What they're basically saying to the minority in New Orleans is, 'We'll make it harder for you to find a job. And if you do, we'll make sure you get paid less.'"

The Department of Homeland Security, whose FEMA division handles most of the contracts, said it is committed to hiring smaller, disadvantaged firms. But many of the no-bid awards were given out to known players who could quickly provide help in an emergency situation, spokesman Larry Orluskie said.

The Labor Department also has said its decision to temporarily suspend affirmative action rules for first-time government contractors doing Katrina work was motivated by a need to reduce paperwork to speed emergency aid.

The Army Corps of Engineers has a better record on minority contracts, with roughly 16 percent of the \$637 million in Katrina contracts going to minority-owned companies, according to agency records.

At a recent meeting in Mississippi for minority businesspeople with federal contracting officials, Rep. Bennie Thompson, D-Miss., said many of the 100 owners walked out in anger when told their best chance of getting work was to seek



Andrew Jenkins, a Jackson, Miss., businessman, says he believes many minority-owned businesses in the Gulf Coast are being unfairly shut out of Katrina-related contracts. (AP photo)

smaller subcontracts from the larger companies.

The larger companies include Kellogg, Brown & Root, a subsidiary of Halliburton Co., which Vice President Dick Cheney headed from 1995 to 2000; and AshBritt Inc., a Florida company with ties to Mississippi's governor, Haley Barbour, former chairman of the Republican National Committee.

"The president has talked about small businesses being the engine of our economy, but when the time for sound bites is over his administration still uses the same backroom deals to take care of their friends," said Thompson, a member of the Congressional Black Caucus.

The situation has exacerbated racial sensitivities that already were heightened by the slow initial federal response to the New Orleans flood. Many poor black residents didn't get help for days.

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*The president has talked about small businesses being the engine of our economy, but when the time for sound bites is over, his administration still uses the same backroom deals to take care of their friends.*



Rep. Bennie Thompson, D-Miss., member, Congressional Black Caucus

## Evacuated Prisoners Describe Beatings

### Rights groups demand investigation

Human Rights Watch and the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund is asking the U.S. Department of Justice to immediately investigate the alleged mistreatment of prisoners evacuated from Hurricane Katrina.

Interviews by the two organizations revealed widespread claims of abuse against inmates at Louisiana's Jena Correctional

Facility. The pretrial prisoner had been evacuated to Jena from Jefferson Parish Prison because of storm damage and flooding.

Every detainee but one of the 23 interviewed reported that he had been hit or kicked by the prison staff.

The claims are credible and serious enough to warrant an independent and comprehensive federal investigation to determine whether the human and civil



Vanita Gupta

rights of the detainees have been violated.

The inmates said that correctional officers at Jena slapped, punched, beat and kicked detainees and sprayed them unnecessarily and repeatedly with pepper spray. Primarily African-Americans, they also described degrading treatment and racist language by the Louisiana state correctional officers, who were primarily white.

"LDF has worked for decades in Louisiana and believes that the alleged abuse at Jena reflects the larger crisis in the state's criminal justice system," said Vanita Gupta, attorney for LDF. "The racism and violence that Jena detainees have described should have no place in any prison."

The prisoners evacuated to Jena because of the hurricane had no contact with the outside world for the first two weeks. They were not allowed to use the phone until just recently. The inmates also complain about the lack of medical care at the facility.

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## Driver Alert Near Schools

Police offer traffic safety tips

The Portland Police Bureau is reminding motorists to be more aware of pedestrians now that school is in session.

Among the problems seen by officers are parents who stop in front of the school in traffic to drop off their children or park across the street, leaving their children to cross in the middle of the road.

According to Sgt. Gary Cerotsky of the Traffic Division, there is some confusion when it comes to the 20 miles per hour speed zone law around schools.

Some zones post speed limits at 20 miles per hour at all times, some during periods of flashing yellow lights, and some during specific times of day.

School Police Division said there are other traffic laws that can directly affect the safety of students.

"Watch for the flashing red lights on stopped school buses during the loading and off-loading of students," said Officer Liu. "And drivers should not encroach into crosswalks when children are using them."

Officer Liu said that being responsible goes both ways.

"Students shouldn't assume that vehicles will stop for them," he said. "They are also responsible, and should walk across the street when it's safe and clear to do so."

For more safety tips, as well as information about the Portland Police Bureau's School Police Division, go to the Bureau's website at [www.portlandpolicebureau.com](http://www.portlandpolicebureau.com) and click on the resources tab.