



# ***NEWS RELEASE***

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OFFICE OF ATTORNEY GENERAL HENRY MCMASTER  
STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

For Immediate Release  
September 19, 2005

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## **Lexington County Woman Pleads Guilty To Insurance Fraud**

**Columbia, S.C.** – Attorney General Henry McMaster announced today that Shaunta M. Dukes, 24, of 1435 Brodie Road in Leesville, pleaded guilty on September 13, 2005, to one (1) count of Presenting a False Claim for Payment in excess of \$5,000, a felony violation of §38-55-170(1), punishable to ten (10) years imprisonment and/or a fine of \$5,000.

On August 2, 2003, Dukes went to a movie with her cousin in the Harbison area of Columbia. Upon exiting the movie theater at 11:45 p.m., Dukes' car was missing. Police were called to the scene and the car was reported as stolen.

The same car was reported burning in a field in Swansea at 11:25 p.m. The recovery location was approximately thirty (30) minutes drive time from the scene of the alleged theft. When Dukes viewed the recovered car, she claimed that the rims and tires on the recovered car were not the ones on it at the time of the alleged theft. There were no signs of forced entry at the scene of the alleged theft, and the keys to the vehicle were embedded with microchip technology that would only allow the car to be started with those specific keys. The car could not be started by means of force, and no evidence of any such forced attempt to start the car was reported. The circumstances of the alleged crime prompted authorities to suspect fraud.

Judge John Breeden, presiding over the General Sessions Court of Richland County, sentenced Dukes to eight (8) years imprisonment, suspended to five (5) years probation. Dukes was ordered to pay restitution of \$18,160 to State Farm Insurance Company. Probation is set to terminate upon full payment of restitution.

The case was investigated by the State Law Enforcement Division, and prosecuted by the Attorney General's Office.

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