FEMA

Fact Sheet

Disaster Legal Services

Under the authority of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 1974, when the President declares a disaster, FEMA, through an agreement with the Young Lawyers Division of the American Bar Association, provides free legal help for survivors of that disaster through the request of the state, local, tribal, and territories. Disaster Legal Services (DLS) provides legal assistance to low-income individuals who, prior to or because of the disaster, are unable to secure legal services adequate to meet their disaster-related needs.

DLS is provided for survivors of presidentially declared major disasters only. Disaster legal advice is limited to cases that will not produce a fee.

Cases that may generate a fee are turned over to the local lawyer referral service.

The following are the types of disaster legal assistance that local lawyers typically provide:

- Help with insurance claims for doctor and hospital bills, loss of property, loss of life, etc.
- Drawing up new wills and other legal papers lost in the disaster
- Help with home repair contracts and contractors
- Advice on problems with landlords

FEMA's mission is to support our citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.

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