



JOINT PRESS RELEASE FREE LEGAL ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE FOR WASHINGTON SURVIVORS OF FLOODING AND MUDSLIDES

SEATTLE, WA, February 28, 2022— A legal hotline is now available for survivors of the severe storms, flooding, landslides, and mudslides in Clallam, Skagit, and Whatcom Counties and the Lummi Nation, Nooksack Indian Tribe, and Quileute Tribe. Disaster survivors facing legal issues related to the severe storms, flooding, landslides, and mudslides may call the hotline at **509-557-0301**. Callers may also leave a message.

The service, which allows callers to receive limited legal assistance from a volunteer lawyer, is a partnership between the Washington State Bar Association, the American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division (ABA YLD), and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

The type of legal assistance available includes:

- Assistance with securing FEMA and other government benefits available to disaster survivors;
- Assistance with life, medical and property insurance claims;
- Help with home repair contracts and contractors;
- Replacement of wills and other important legal documents destroyed in the disaster;
- Assisting in consumer protection matters, remedies and procedures;
- Counseling on mortgage-foreclosure problems;
- Counseling on landlord-tenant problems.

Survivors should be aware that there are some limitations on disaster legal services. For example, assistance is not available for cases that will produce a money award.

Major Disaster Declaration

On January 5, 2022, a Major Disaster Declaration was issued for the state of Washington, making federal funding available to individuals and households who sustained damage as a result of the flooding and mudslides occurring November 13-15, 2021, in Clallam, Skagit, and Whatcom Counties and the Lummi Nation, Nooksack Indian Tribe, and Quileute Tribe.

To register with FEMA, and if eligible, apply for federal and state disaster assistance, register online at [DisasterAssistance.gov](https://www.fema.gov/disaster-assistance) or via smartphone or Web-enabled device at m.fema.gov.

Applicants may also call 800-621-3362 or 800-462-7585 (TTY) seven days a week from 4:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Pacific Time. Applicants should be prepared to provide basic information about themselves, insurance coverage, and any other information to help substantiate the loss.

Background

When the President declares a major disaster, FEMA, in cooperation with the American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division, establishes a toll-free number for disaster survivors to request legal assistance. Funding for the toll-free line comes from FEMA under the authority of Section 415 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Public Law 100-707). The American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division in turn partners with state bars, local bar associations and other legal organizations to recruit volunteer lawyers in affected areas to handle survivors' cases.

Hotline Partner Members

The following organizations have joined forces to establish a hotline for disaster survivors to request free legal assistance, and to provide coordination for volunteer attorneys.

American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division – The ABA YLD is the largest national organization of young lawyers, provides leadership in serving the public and the profession, and promotes excellence and fulfillment in the practice of law. Its parent organization, the ABA, is the national voice of the legal profession and the largest voluntary professional membership group in the world.

Federal Emergency Management Agency – FEMA coordinates the federal government's role in preparing for, preventing, mitigating the effects of, responding to, and recovering from all domestic disasters, whether natural or man-made, including acts of terror.

Washington State Pro Bono Council – The Washington State Pro Bono Council is the consortium of 16 independent, county based volunteer lawyer programs located around Washington State. Volunteer lawyer programs are the primary vehicle for pro bono and volunteer legal services for low-income clients in Washington.

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