



State Bar of Georgia

Lawyers Serving the Public and the Justice System

Media Advisory

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State Bar YLD Sets Up Disaster Assistance Hotline for Flood Victims

ATLANTA, Oct. 1, 2009 – The State Bar of Georgia Young Lawyers Division (YLD), in conjunction with the American Bar Association (ABA) YLD, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Georgia Legal Services Program, has set up a disaster relief hotline to assist persons affected by severe storms and flooding beginning on Sept. 18. Flood victims who reside in the impacted counties—Carroll, Catoosa, Chattooga, Cherokee, Cobb, DeKalb, Douglas, Fulton, Gwinnett, Paulding, Rockdale, Stephens and Walker—and are unable to afford legal representation are encouraged to call the hotline. The toll free number is 1-866-584-8027.

Callers will receive assistance for issues such as landlord/tenant disputes, family law, consumer law, housing law, food stamps, Medicaid, unemployment benefits issues and identification replacement. Volunteer attorneys will return messages left at the toll free number; callers may request a Spanish-speaking attorney return their call.

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Background

When the U.S. President declares a major disaster, FEMA, in cooperation with the American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division, establishes a toll-free number for disaster victims 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 No. 100-707). The American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division in turn partners with state bar associations and other legal organizations to recruit volunteer lawyers in affected areas to handle victims' cases.

Victims should be aware that there are some limitations on disaster legal services. For example, assistance is not available for cases that will produce a fee (i.e., those cases where attorneys are paid part of the settlement by the court). Such cases are referred to a local lawyer referral service.

State Bar of Georgia – The State Bar of Georgia, with offices in Atlanta, Savannah and Tifton, was established in 1964 by Georgia's Supreme Court as the successor to the voluntary Georgia Bar Association, founded in 1884. All lawyers licensed to practice in Georgia belong to the State Bar. Its more than 40,000 members work together to strengthen the constitutional promise of justice for all, promote principles of duty and public service among Georgia's lawyers, and administer a strict code of legal ethics.

American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division – The ABA YLD, 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. Through an agreement with the American Bar Association, FEMA underwrites the cost of operating toll free legal assistance lines for victims in areas designated as federal disaster sites.