

## About Legal Services of North Florida (LSNF)

Legal Services of North Florida, Inc. provides free legal assistance to eligible low-income persons in civil matters (we do not provide legal assistance in criminal or traffic matters).

LSNF offers free educational seminars and informational brochures regarding the areas of law we practice. Call your local office (listed on the back of this brochure) for further information.

This brochure is for general education only. It is not intended to be used to solve *individual problems*. If you have specific questions, see an attorney. LSNF offices are listed on the back of this brochure.

**LSC** | America's Partner  
for Equal Justice  
LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION



United Way of the Big Bend



United Way  
of Escambia County

## Legal Services of North Florida Offices

Franklin, Jefferson, Leon,  
& Wakulla Counties:

2119 Delta Boulevard  
Tallahassee, FL 32303  
(850) 385-9007

Calhoun, Gadsden, Jackson,  
& Liberty Counties:

121 North Jackson Street  
Quincy, FL 32351  
(850) 875-9881

Bay, Gulf, Holmes,  
& Washington Counties:

211 East 11th Street  
Panama City, FL 32401  
(850) 769-3581

Okaloosa & Walton Counties:

133 Staff Drive, NE  
Fort Walton Beach, FL 32548  
(850) 862-3279

Escambia & Santa Rosa Counties:

1741 North Palafox Street  
Pensacola, FL 32501  
(850) 432-8222

**Online at [www.lsnf.org](http://www.lsnf.org)**

**Legal Aid Disaster Hotline:  
1-866-550-2929**

**FEMA Assistance:  
1-800-621-FEMA (3362)**



**Legal Services**  
of NORTH FLORIDA  
HOPE. JUSTICE. FOR ALL.

# DISASTER INFORMATION FOR RENTERS



**1. The apartment I live in is in really bad shape from the hurricane, but the landlord told me that if I want to stay I must pay full rent - what should I do?**

Your landlord may be experiencing financial hardship until his/her insurance company pays out money for repairs. Talk to your landlord to see if the rent can be reduced until the apartment is repaired. See if the landlord will allow you to move to another unit in the building that is livable.

**2. What if my landlord won't negotiate?**

You have the right to reduce your rent in proportion to the



damage to the unit. If your apartment is unlivable, you can move out. In either case, you should send a certified letter to your landlord telling him/her of your actions. Please contact Legal Services of North Florida, Inc. for more information on what you can do based on your specific situation.

**3. All my stuff was destroyed when the roof fell in on the place I rent - what help can I get?**

If you had renter's insurance at the time of the hurricane, contact your insurance company. If your situation is desperate, make sure you describe your situation to the insurance company. If the insurance company agrees your loss is covered, you can ask for an advance payment to cover a part of your loss.

**4. What if I do not have any insurance on my property?**

If you did not have renter's insurance, see if your landlord had insurance to cover your belongings. If your losses are not covered by any insurance policy, you may be able to get Individual and Household Program (IHP) money from FEMA to replace necessary items of personal property such as clothing, household items, furnishings and appliances. You may apply for these benefits through FEMA at 1-800-621-3362 (hearing/speech impaired 1-800-462-7585).

**5. My landlord told me to move out the next day because he wants the apartment for his daughter who lost her house in the hurricane, and told me if I wasn't out, he'd change the locks - do I have to move?**



Florida law does not allow a landlord to just lock you out or turn off the utilities or to use any other "self help" means to get you to leave. The landlord must file an eviction action in court and, then you only have to move out after the judge in your eviction case enters a final judgment of eviction. Also, the landlord must first give you some type of written notice to move before filing an eviction case against you in court.

If you get any eviction court papers, you can call Legal Services of North Florida for information on how to file your answer to the eviction lawsuit. If the landlord does lock you out, you can call the police, and you should consult a lawyer to find out about an action for damages.

**6. My apartment is so bad I cannot live in it and I am going to move. I want my security deposit returned - what are my rights?**

If you have a written lease, read your lease to see what it says. If you do not have a written lease, or your lease does not say anything about deposits, then the landlord must either return your deposit within 15 days after you move out or send you a letter, by certified mail, within thirty (30) days, saying why he will not return your deposit. You then have fifteen (15) days to object in writing, or the landlord will be allowed to keep the security deposit.

Before you leave your apartment, you must give your landlord your new address. If you and your landlord disagree about whether you should get your deposit back, you can call Legal Services of North Florida. We can explain how you can take your landlord to small claims court to get back your security deposit.

