

The North Carolina Bar Association, through its Young Lawyers Division, is providing free legal assistance to persons in North Carolina affected by the severe storms, tornadoes and flooding of April 16.

Activation of the Disaster Legal Services program initiated April 19 with President Obama's declaration of a major disaster. The President's action made Federal funding available to affected individuals in the counties of Bertie, Bladen, Cumberland, Halifax, Harnett, Johnston, Lee, Onslow, Wake and Wilson.

Gov. Perdue announced on Good Friday (April 22) that a subsequent federal declaration has been issued for Craven, Currituck, Greene, Hertford, Hoke, Pitt, Robeson and Sampson counties.

Federal funding also is available to state and eligible local governments and certain private nonprofit organizations on a cost-sharing basis in these 18 counties for debris removal and emergency protective measures, including direct federal assistance.

The program is conducted in conjunction with the ABA's Disaster Legal Services Program and FEMA.

Victims of the storms are urged to report insurance claims to their insurance companies as quickly as possible and have an adjuster look at the property before making significant repairs.

Storm victims needing help with legal problems may call the N.C. Bar Association weekdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at 1-800-662-7407 and ask for Disaster Legal Services to leave your information. A volunteer attorney will call you back within 48-72 hours.

Attorneys who wish to volunteer should call that same number or e-mail [sections@ncbar.org](mailto:sections@ncbar.org).

The volunteer attorneys will not be seeking and will not accept business from those affected by these storms. It is strictly a public service.

The N.C. Bar Association also has a free informational pamphlet titled "Rebuilding After Disaster Strikes," which is available by sending a self-addressed stamped envelope to YLD Disaster Services, PO Box 3688, Cary, NC 27519. The pamphlet may also be downloaded off the NCBA Web site ([www.ncbar.org](http://www.ncbar.org)) where it is located on the home page under Featured Items.

Tips on making insurance claims include: follow up initial telephone claims in writing with a list of all losses and take pictures of the damage; provide receipts, appraisals and photographs to the agent and keep a copy of all written information; and obtain estimates for repair and replacement costs.

Storm victims are advised to talk with a lawyer before signing any release or waiver that may prevent them from making a claim. The NCBA also advises storm victims to hire only licensed contractors to make repairs.