



JOINT PRESS RELEASE

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Free legal assistance available for survivors of the Earthquake and Aftershocks in Davis and Salt Lake counties

Utah, August 6, 2020 — A toll-free legal assistance hotline is available to people affected by the earthquake and aftershocks that occurred in Davis and Salt Lake Counties on March 18, 2020 through April 17, 2020. This service is a partnership among Utah Legal Services, the State Bar of Utah, the American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division (ABA YLD), the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and other local organizations.

Low-income individuals facing legal issues as a result of DR-4548 may call **1-800-662-4245**. Individuals who qualify for assistance will be matched with Utah lawyers who can provide free, limited legal help. Survivors should be aware that there are some limitations on disaster legal services.

Examples of legal assistance available include:

- Assistance securing government benefits as they are made available to disaster victims;
- Assistance with life, medical, and property insurance claims;
- Help with home repair contracts and contractors;
- Replacement of wills and other important legal documents lost or destroyed in the disaster;
- Consumer protection issues such as price-gouging and avoiding contractor scams in the rebuilding process;
- Counseling on mortgage-foreclosure problems; and
- Counseling on landlord-tenant problems

Major disaster declaration

On July 9, 2020, FEMA announced a major disaster declaration for Davis and Salt Lake Counties making federal funding available to individuals and businesses owners who sustained damage as a result of earthquake and aftershocks from March 18, 2020 through April 17, 2020.

People who sustained property damage as a result of the disaster are urged to register with FEMA, as they may be eligible for federal and state disaster assistance. People can register online at [DisasterAssistance.gov](https://www.disasterassistance.gov) or via smartphone or Web-enabled device at m.fema.gov. Applicants may also call 800-621-3362 or 800-462-7585 (TTY) from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. (CT) seven days a week.

Low-interest disaster loans from the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) are available for eligible applicants. SBA helps businesses of all sizes (including landlords), private nonprofit organizations, homeowners, and renters fund repairs or rebuilding efforts and cover the cost of replacing lost or damaged personal property. Disaster loans cover losses not fully compensated by insurance or other recoveries.

For more information, individuals may contact SBA's Disaster Assistance Customer Service Center by calling 800-659-2955, emailing disastercustomerservice@sba.gov, or visiting SBA's website at disasterloan.sba.gov/ela. Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals may call 800-877-8339.

Assistance

Individuals who qualify also may use <https://utah.freelegalanswers.org/> — an online Q&A-style service where individuals can pose specific questions related to disaster civil legal issues and have them answered online by volunteer attorneys. Utah Legal Answers is operated by the Utah Bar Association in conjunction with the American Bar Association.

Individuals who are in need of legal assistance with recovery from the disaster can apply with Utah Legal Services over the phone at 1-800-662-4245, online at <https://www.utahlegalservices.org/>.

Volunteer Attorneys

Attorneys who would like to provide legal help to the survivors of the earthquake and aftershocks can find out more about volunteer opportunities by contacting Tatiana Christensen, Pro Bono Director at Utah Legal Services, at tchristensen@utahlegalservices.org.

Beware of fraud

Both FEMA and the Utah Attorney General's Office warn Utah of the risk of fraud and common scams in the wake of a disaster. Common post-disaster fraud practices include phony housing inspectors, fraudulent building contractors, bogus pleas for disaster donations, and fake offers of state or federal aid. Utah citizens are urged to ask questions, and to require identification when someone claims to represent a government agency.

Survivors should also keep in mind that state and federal workers never ask for or accept money, and always carry identification badges with a photograph. There is no fee required to apply for or to receive disaster assistance from FEMA, the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), or the state. Additionally, no state or federal government disaster assistance agency will call to ask for your financial account information. Unless you place a call to the agency yourself, you should not provide personal information over the phone as it can lead to identity theft.

Those who suspect fraud can call the FEMA Disaster Fraud Hotline toll free at 866-720-5721. Complaints may also be made to local law enforcement agencies.

Partnership members

Utah Legal Services (<https://www.utahlegalservices.org>)

Utah State Bar (<https://www.utahbar.org>)

American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division (americanbar.org) - 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.gov) - 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 ABA, FEMA underwrites the cost of operating toll-free legal assistance lines for victims in areas designated as federal disaster sites.

Disaster Legal Aid.Org (disasterlegalaid.org) – The National Disaster Legal Aid Resource Center, or DisasterLegalAid.org (DLA), is a nationwide project that hosts self-help tools and legal information for people and communities impacted by natural disasters. DLA also serves as a central hub for collaboration, communication, and networking among legal advocates serving disaster-affected individuals. It is a collaborative effort of Lone Star Legal Aid, Pro Bono Net, the American Bar Association, the Legal Services Corporation, and the National Legal Aid & Defender Association