

# KNOW YOUR RIGHTS!

Apply for free legal help by  
calling

1-803-744-9430 or

1-888-346-5592

*The mission of SCLS is to provide legal services to protect the rights and represent the interests of low income South Carolinians.*

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

Carolina Legal Services provides community education and detailed informational brochures

## SC Legal Services also assists with:

- Eviction defense
- Food Stamp (SNAP) appeals
- Medicaid/Medicare appeals
- Debt collection defense
- Access to schools
- Unemployment denials
- And many other issues

LEGAL AID TELEPHONE  
INTAKE SERVICE:  
1-888-346-5592



SOUTH CAROLINA  
LEGAL SERVICES

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Phone: 803.799.9668  
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SOUTH CAROLINA LEGAL  
SERVICES

Making justice available to all low income  
South Carolinians

# RENTERS: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW IN A DISASTER



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1-888-346-5592



South Carolina  
**BAR FOUNDATION**  
Lawyers Sustaining Justice



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, or 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 do not have the right to reduce your rent even though the unit is damaged. Under South Carolina



law, you must put your landlord on written notice of all needed repairs. Always keep a copy of your written requests for repairs. The landlord has 14 days to start repairing. If your apartment is unlivable, you can move out. If the landlord fails to repair, you can sue the landlord to make him repair or move out if the repairs are significant.

3. **All of 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 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 **800-621-3362** (hearing/speech impaired **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 he told me if I wasn't out, he would change the locks—do I have to move?** South Carolina law does not allow a landlord to change your locks or turn off your utilities or use any other "self help" means to get you to leave. The landlord must file an eviction proceeding in court and then you only



have to move out after the judge in your 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 eviction court papers, you can call South Carolina Legal Services for information on how to file your answer to the eviction lawsuit. If the landlord does lock you out, you can call the police to let you back in, 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 and see what it says. If you do not have a written lease, or your lease doesn't say anything about deposits, then you must submit to your landlord a forwarding address to which the amount due and the written notice about deductions or withhold of your security deposit must be sent.



If you and your landlord disagree about whether you should get your deposit back, you can call South Carolina Legal Services. We can explain how you can

take your landlord to small claims court to get back your security deposit.