



Florida Rural Legal Services, Inc.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS – 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 also be experiencing financial hardship until his/her insurance money comes through 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 rent in proportion to the damage to the unit. If the unit is unlivable you can move out. In either case, you should send a certified letter to your landlord notifying him/her of your actions. Please contact Florida Rural Legal Services for more detailed information on the appropriate action to take in 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 company agrees that there is coverage, you can ask for an advance payment to cover a part of your loss. Read the information in the insurance section of this handout about how to prepare for the adjuster's visit, and how to handle your insurance claim.

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 IFG money for replacement of necessary items of personal property. 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 judgement of eviction. Furthermore, the landlord must first give you some type of written notice to move before the landlord can file an eviction case against you in court.

If you get any eviction court papers, you can call 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, and, you should consult a lawyer regarding 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.

(Continued on reverse...)

(Cont.) However, before you leave, 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. We can explain how you can take your landlord to small claims court to get back your security deposit.

If you have additional questions, feel free to call our nearest office for more information.

Belle Glade ✧ Fort Myers ✧ Fort Pierce ✧ Lakeland ✧ West Palm Beach

Florida Rural Legal Services, Inc.

Who We Are

Florida Rural Legal Services, Inc. (FRLS) is a private non-profit §501(c)3 corporation that provides free civil legal assistance to indigents and low-income elderly persons in thirteen counties in South Florida. FRLS also provides legal assistance to migrant farmworkers throughout the state of Florida. Our agency has been in existence since 1966, providing high quality services in such areas as housing, public benefits, civil rights, employment, and family law.

Our Mission

The mission of Florida Rural Legal Services is to provide accessible legal assistance that empowers low income and disadvantaged populations through:

- effective advocacy on behalf of those affected by adverse conditions
- outreach to persons isolated by geography, language, race, gender, disability, age, economic status, or other circumstances
- vigorous participation within the community infrastructure
- provision of comprehensive community education and support

Our Office Locations

Belle Glade : 1500 NW Avenue “L”, Suite A. (561) 993-0003 or 1-888-993-0003

Fort Myers: 3210 Cleveland Avenue, Suite 100a. (239) 334-4554 or 1-800-476-8937

Immokalee: 210 South First Street. (239) 657-3681 or 1-800-476-1837

Lakeland: 963 East Memorial Boulevard. (863) 688-7376 or 1-800-277-7680

West Palm Beach: 423 Fern Street, Suite 220. (561) 820-8902 or 1-800-284-4588

Pou tout moun ki pale creole, si-w gin problem ak siklon-n nan e ou bezwen konin plis infomasyon ou kisa pou-w fe. Ou kapab rele nan nimero gratis sa- yo. 1(800) 476-8937 or 1(800)476-1837
