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Aid in disasters

July 2009 Issue

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The ABA is teaming up with the Legal Services Corp., the national Legal Aid & Defender Association, and Pro Bono Net on a website to help disaster victims locate legal assistance. National Disaster Legal Aid, at disasterlegalaid.org, is a central resource for legal aid and pro bono lawyers across the country on legal issues related to all types of disasters. The site also helps recruit and mobilize pro bono lawyers in the aftermath of a disaster, and provides information on legal issues related to disasters affecting low- and moderate-income individuals.

The site builds on the groups' collaboration on the Katrina Legal Aid Resource Center, found at katrinalegalaid.org, a website created in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. The site logged more than 163,000 visits through July 2008.

"The new site lists information for people who need help and the lawyers who want to volunteer to help them," says ABA President H. Thomas Wells Jr., of Maynard, Cooper & Gale in Birmingham, Ala.

"By pooling the resources of our organizations, we can provide services in a timely, efficient manner."

Gulf Coast residents are still reeling from Katrina, even after massive volunteer efforts from lawyers nationwide, says Mark Schickman, chair of the ABA Standing Committee on Pro Bono and Public Service, "while new disasters keep coming over the horizon and chronic legal needs of the poor remain unmet."

Schickman, a partner at Freeland Cooper & Foreman in San Francisco, adds: "This website will help our clients and volunteers find each other."

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