

Local Bars Offer Disaster Preparedness Resources

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The 2006 hurricane season will soon be here, while haunting images remain of destruction from last year's storms. We continue to hear stories of families separated, businesses destroyed and homes not rebuilt.

Persons have lost material possessions, and many suffer continuing psychological and emotional trauma. I cannot imagine losing my neighborhood and never again worshipping with my friends at church, or my children never again seeing their classmates.

The law firm Morrison & Foerster LLP has produced a handbook with legal information that individuals, families and small businesses need after flooding and other devastation caused by hurricanes. This project was completed in conjunction with the Center for Pro Bono, a project of the American Bar Association Standing Committee on Pro Bono and Public Service.

The Center for Pro Bono has a helpful Web site of free Hurricane Katrina Disaster resources at www.abanet.org/katrina/.

The Virginia State Bar's Special Committee on Access to Legal Services is cosponsoring a continuing legal education program entitled "Preparedness Through the Prism of Public Interest Law" with the University of Virginia's Miller Center of Public Affairs on April 26, 2006. Martha Bergmark, founding president of the Mississippi Center for Justice, will speak about her participation in regional relief operations for the recent Gulf Coast Storms.

More information about this event is available at www.vsb.org/probono/pbc06.pdf.

Other disaster-related volunteer opportunities for law firms, voluntary bars and individual lawyers are available through Virginia Corps at www.virginiacorps.org. The site offers homeland security and preparedness service options for professionals and citizen volunteers.

The VSB Pro Bono Conference includes a one-hour emergency legal services training session by the young lawyers of the VSB and The Virginia Bar Association. This is offered under an ongoing standby initiative cosponsored by the ABA and the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The Pro Bono Conference will also discuss opportunities for lawyers to volunteer in New Orleans and elsewhere as temporary *pro hac vice* cocounsel with any of six eligible legal nonprofits under the Louisiana Supreme Court's supplemental emergency legal services pro bono rule.

During its midyear meeting in Virginia Beach, the Old Dominion Bar Association discussed local responses to natural disasters.

Other members of the Conference of Local Bar Associations may find that local government officials and members of the judiciary are willing to discuss these topics and lend assistance to those in need.