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Free Legal Assistance Available for Victims of Irene Flooding

September 22, 2011 - Vermonters with legal problems that arise from Tropical Storm Irene damage can get free legal assistance by calling **1-800-889-2047**. Vermont Legal Aid (VLA) and Legal Services Law Line (LSLL), with generous assistance from the Vermont Volunteer Lawyers Project's pro bono attorneys and the Vermont Bar Association, will provide information, advocacy, and representation for individuals and families facing legal issues stemming from the disaster. All callers will receive some form of help, regardless of income. Anyone with a flood-related legal issue is encouraged to call the Disaster Legal Assistance Hotline at 1-800-889-2047.

"Flooding has created many legal problems for Vermonters, and we expect more legal problems to present themselves as time goes on," said Legal Aid attorney Jessica Radbord. The type of legal assistance available includes:

- Help securing FEMA benefits, SBA Loans, disaster unemployment insurance, and other federal benefits available to disaster survivors
- Assistance with property insurance claims
- Help with home repair contracts and contractors, including price-gouging
- Replacement of wills and other important legal documents destroyed in the disaster
- Representation, advocacy, and advice on landlord-tenant problems
- Counseling on mortgage and foreclosure issues

Legal Aid and Law Line plan to be involved in Vermont's long-term recovery as well. "By working with residents and community leaders, we will work to address some of the broader problems that Irene exposed, like the lack of affordable housing stock and safety issues related to mobile home parks in flood plains," added Radbord. Ongoing disaster preparedness is another issue Legal Aid and Law Line are addressing.

"One of the greatest things about Vermont is how we are able to pull together in times of need," said Legal Services Law Line Director Tom Garrett. "Vermonters do not have to try to figure out these legal issues on their own. We have a team of attorneys ready to help anyone with a flood-related legal problem. All they need to do is call **1-800-889-2047**."