




# HOUSING

## TENANT ISSUES AFTER A DISASTER

### CONTACT US

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# A QUICK GUIDE TO YOUR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES IF YOU ARE A TENANT AND YOUR RENTAL PROPERTY IS DAMAGED OR DESTROYED BY A NATURAL DISASTER.

**1 Read Your Contract/Lease** – If you have a written contract or lease, read it carefully to see if it has any terms about damage or destruction after a storm.

**2 Inspect the Home** – Take pictures of the house/apartment before and immediately after the storm. Keep photos and/or videos of these for your records. Take screenshots of the lease and rental insurance policy if there is one.

**3 Landlord Obligation** – To comply with codes or if no codes maintain the roof, windows, doors, steps porches, exterior walls, foundation, and structural components and plumbing.

**4 Tenant Obligation** – notify the landlord as soon as possible of damage to the house or apartment.

**5 House has damage** – if house or apartment is only partially damaged, according to Florida law, your rent may be reduced by the value of the part of the unit damaged or destroyed. Provide written notice of intent to reduce rent to the landlord.

**6 House destroyed** – under Florida law, you may terminate the rental agreement and immediately leave or vacate the property. Provide written notice to the landlord stating the damage and destruction and immediately vacate the premises.

**7 Take pictures** – Take pictures of the property before and after the storm to document the damage to the premises from the storm.

**8 Personal Property Destroyed** – damage to personal property is usually the responsibility of the tenant. If you purchased renter's insurance file a claim with the insurance company otherwise file a FEMA claim for personal property that was damaged or destroyed.

**9 Illegal Eviction** – The landlord may not use force or other illegal means such as changing the locks or removing the doors to evict you. The landlord must first give you a written notice to move before filing an eviction action. If the landlord files an eviction action, you only have to move out after a judge signs an order of eviction. Contact your local legal aid program or other attorney if you believe you are being wrongfully evicted.

