

Disaster relief teams break for Easter, return to fields this week

By William Perkins

Editor

It's back to work for volunteers with Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief (MBDR) after an "operational pause" for the observance of Easter.

"MBDR will return to Amory, Rolling Fork, and other affected areas to assess the needs moving forward as these communities continue the recovery process" from the severe weather of the past several weeks, said Hubert Yates, disaster relief director for the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board in Jackson.

"It is anticipated that additional chainsaw/debris removal teams will be needed in addition to demolition services to assist homeowners in preparing to rebuild their homes," he said.

Trained and credentialed MBDR volunteers began mobilizing across the state after deadly tornadoes struck on the evening of March 24. That severe weather episode was followed by another powerful storm on March 31 that resulted in significant damage to additional areas.

Rolling Fork

"With widespread damage, MBDR leadership reached out to the Southern Baptist Convention Disaster Relief Network for assistance to insure that areas that were affected received assistance," Yates said. "Arkansas Baptist Disaster Relief responded to the call and coordinated with MBDR in

establishing an operations site at First Church, Rolling Fork, that opened on March 26.

"This site provided incident management, spiritual and emotional care, assessment, chainsaw, tarping [placing tarpaulins over damaged roofs], and volunteer support/survivor feeding. Over the initial 12 days of operation, 276 volunteer days were recorded with 3,907 volunteer hours served from MBDR and Arkansas Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers.

"On March 31, Arkansas experienced their own severe weather outbreak and with the assistance of an Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief feeding team [in Rolling Fork], Arkansas Baptist Disaster Relief returned home to serve their affected areas," Yates said.

"A total of 4,023 meals were served to survivors and the deployed volunteers; 117 work requests for chainsaw, tarping, and debris removal were completed or closed prior to the [Easter] pause. The teams had the opportunity for 88 ministry contacts, five Gospel presentations and recorded one profession of faith," Yates reported.

Amory

In Amory, MBDR completed 219 requests for assistance that included chainsaw, debris removal, tarping, and cleanup assistance. The Amory operation recorded 777 MBDR and church-associated volunteer days and 7,700 volunteer hours.

"There were 122 ministry contacts and two Gospel presentations," Yates said. "The volunteer support feeding unit provided 1,854 meals for the deployed volunteers and church volunteers."

Carroll/Montgomery Counties

Prior to the Easter pause, MBDR completed operations in the Carroll/Montgomery County areas that sustained damage during

March 24 storm. "MBDR used three chainsaw teams providing 56 volunteer days and 336 volunteer hours to complete 13 requested for chainsaw, tarping, and debris removal without the need for establishing a base site, using a 'drive-in/out' procedure," Yates said.

March 31 storms

Mississippi was also affected by severe weather on March 31. "MBDR has deployed volunteer assets to Eudora in Desoto County, where operations are underway to assist approximately 20 homeowners with chainsaw and debris removal" Yates said. "These storms also affected Pontotoc, Lee, Prentiss, and Itawamba Counties.



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DISASTER DISCUSSION – Bryant Wright (right), president of DR Send Relief, the Southern Baptist compassion ministry, jointly managed by the International Mission Board and North American Mission Board, talks with Hubert Yates (center), disaster relief director for the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, and Randy Garrett, disaster relief director for the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, on March 31 at First Church, Rolling Fork. (Photo credit: William Perkins)

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“After consulting with Pontotoc Association Missions Strategist J.R. Ray, at this time it is not anticipated that additional assistance will be needed,” Yates reported. “MBDR will continue to monitor.”

In the Tupelo area, the March 31 storm primarily damaged commercial/industrial sites, Yates said. “The MBDR-affiliated team at Belden Church, Belden, and Lee Association are monitoring the needs that may be identified, in coordination with the Lee County Emergency Management Agency.”

Yates listed prayer requests for immediate needs in the aftermath of the storms:

- Prayer for each community affected, the churches and their staffs, the volunteers as they respond, and their leadership as they plan and lead.

- Financial donations to allow for purchase of items in bulk quantities, which will facilitate transportation, handling, and storage.

Tax-deductible donations to assist MBDR are being accepted. At the present time, in-kind contributions such as clothing and furniture are not being accepted. “The need right now is for critical supplies to be purchased in bulk, such as food and cleaning materials. Monetary gifts will help accomplish that,”

Yates said.

Monetary gifts may be made by check, or electronically by clicking [here](#). Checks should be made payable to Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, with "Disaster Relief" designated on the memo line, and mailed to MBCB Business Office, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530.

For general information about MBDR volunteering and credentialing, click [here](#).

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