

Hurricane Sally mostly bypasses state; Miss. Baptist Disaster Relief continues recovery ministry in Louisiana after Hurricane Laura

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Editor*

Hurricane Sally came ashore at 5 a.m. Sept. 16 in the Gulf Shores area of Alabama as a Category 2 storm, after earlier predictions of landfall in the Biloxi area proved to be off slightly. The Mississippi Gulf Coast was spared the worst of the bad weather; tropical storm warnings and coastal flood advisories were canceled by 10 a.m. News reports in the morning hours of Sept. 16 indicated trees are down in eastern Jackson County near the Alabama state line, and thousands of customers in Alabama and Mississippi are without electrical power.

“With early assessment information from associational mission directors, associational mission strategists, pastors, emergency management personnel, and Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief (MBDR) team members indicating that the effects of Hurricane Sally are minimal in Mississippi, MBDR crews are standing down” said Hubert Yates, interim state disaster relief coordinator for Mississippi Baptists.

“Local disaster relief teams in the affected area may be called on for homeowner assistance, but no widespread requests for assistance are expected.,” Yates said. “As Hurricane Sally moves north through Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina,

there may be a call to assist those states in cleanup and recovery activities. With the heavy rainfall being experienced in those areas, the possibility of a flood recovery response is high.”

Mississippi Governor Tate Reeves declared a state of emergency Sept. 13, followed by a federal emergency declaration by U.S. President Donald Trump on Sept. 14, as forecasters predicted the Mississippi Gulf Coast would take a direct hit from Sally. Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief (MBDR) teams were prepared to provide mass feeding, placement of tarps on damaged roofs, chainsaw/debris removal, and flood recovery services to those affected by Sally, reported Yates.

Credentialed disaster relief volunteers who can serve in the coming weeks are requested to check in with the Men’s Ministry Department at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board: dvail@mbcb.org. For the latest information on Hurricane Sally, visit nhc.noaa.gov.

Meanwhile, SBDR operations are ongoing in the Lake Charles, La., area following Hurricane Laura’s landfall there on Aug. 27, according to Yates. Laura was a high-end Category 4 hurricane when it came ashore, with sustained winds of 150 miles per hour. “While the feeding effort in support of The Salvation Army in Lake Charles has been completed, a 25-person MBDR feeding team departed Sept. 14 to support feeding efforts of a direct-to-public feeding operation and Southern Baptist Disaster Relief (SBDR) volunteer feeding activities currently in operation at First Church, Moss Bluff, La.,” Yates reported.

“This operation site is the primary hub for materials distribution, feeding, SBDR operations, and incident management for the Moss Bluff and northeast areas of Lake Charles,” he said. MBDR volunteers will be providing approximately 3,000 meals a day, feeding approximately 100 on-site volunteers, and supplying 2,900 direct-to-public meals.

MBDR feeding teams will rotate in and out for the next two weeks until relieved by another SBDR partner.

“MBDR chainsaw teams have been rotating in to the DeRidder and Moss Bluff areas for debris removal activities and roof tarping. As of September 14, MBDR began a partnership with Oklahoma Baptist Disaster Relief to provide two chainsaw/debris removal teams per week through early October for operations in Moss Bluff in support of Louisiana Baptist Disaster Relief (LBDR) efforts across the state.

“Teams are being scheduled to support our operations in Louisiana through early October. Currently, there are 19 SBDR operations sites being coordinated by LBDR and Arkansas Baptist Disaster Relief from headquarters at Trinity Church, Lake Charles. These sites represent the work of 19 state/regional Baptist convention disaster relief ministries. These sites have provided over 195,456 meals, 59,283 volunteer hours, and completed 797 chainsaw/debris/tarping operations. There have been over 750-plus Gospel presentations with 196 individuals making professions of faith. God is at work even in the destruction of the storm.”

In-kind donations (clothing, shoes, diapers, etc.) are not being accepted at this time. Monetary donations may be made online at mbcb.org/giving. Select “Give as an Individual,” and then designate your gift to “Disaster Relief.” Check donations are also accepted. Simply make the check payable to the “Mississippi Baptist Convention Board,” designate “MS Disaster Relief” on the memo line, and mail to MBCB, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. All financial donations given through Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief go directly to support relief/recovery efforts in partnership with local Baptist churches and associations.

By making financial donations to reputable response organizations like MBDR, those who give enable the provision of needed materials in bulk, allowing the handling and

distribution of items using forklifts and pallet jacks and reducing human effort and time involved. Storage and distribution are simplified as materials can be effectively handled. For a smaller event with a single point of need (i.e., school supplies), a collection works well. However, in disaster situations where the need is great and ever-changing, collection drives only serve to tax the limited volunteer resources even further.

Please encourage financial giving to reputable groups like MBDR operating in the area. Thanks to the generous support shown by Mississippi Baptist churches for the Cooperative Program, administrative costs of the MBDR ministry are covered and all donations go directly to support relief/recovery efforts in partnership with local Baptist churches and associations.

Please encourage your churches to pray for all the Southern Baptist teams that are at work or are preparing to go in the coming days and weeks. SBDR has disaster work ongoing in Colorado (fires), California (fires), Pennsylvania (floods), Iowa (windstorm), Minnesota (domestic unrest), Wisconsin (domestic unrest), and Virginia (domestic unrest).

“Pray especially for the MBDR teams – your disaster missionaries on point to share help, healing, and hope in Jesus’ Name,” Yates said.