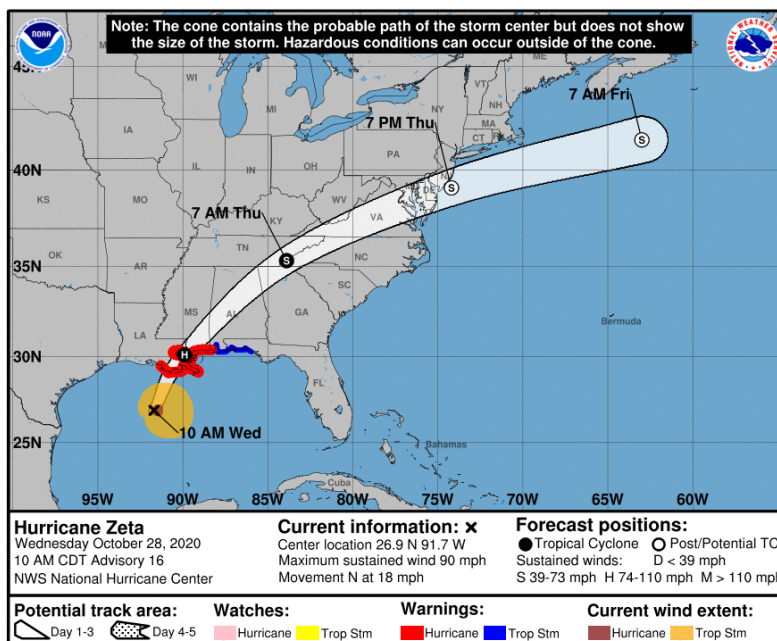


Hurricane Zeta surprises officials with strength, ferocity after landfall

GULFPORT, Miss. (Updated Oct. 30) – Upward of 200,000 Mississippians are without electrical power and other utilities after Hurricane Zeta raked the Mississippi Gulf Coast and southern inland counties Oct. 28 with winds only one mile per hour under a Category 3 designation.



Two deaths in the state due to the storm have been reported thus far: a man who drowned while videoing from a pier along the coast at the height of the storm, and a motorcyclist who died after striking a damaged, low-hanging power line in Gulfport just after midnight Oct. 30. Neither victim has been publicly identified.

Hubert Yates, interim state disaster relief coordinator in the Men's Ministry Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, reported before the storm hit that Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief teams were standing by for mobilization after the storm cleared the state to the east.

The first job for MBDR will be damage assessment, he said.

"I don't think there was any doubt that there was an expectation that as this particular storm made landfall that it would weaken in strength," said Miss. Governor Tate Reeves Oct. 29 at an outdoor press conference in Hancock County. "That is a model that occurs just about every single time that hurricanes are hitting landfall in the Gulf and unfortunately last night this storm which hit landfall at a very high Category 2 level... it really didn't lose strength throughout its time in Louisiana and its time in Mississippi, and because of that we're seeing significant damage throughout south Mississippi."

A report carried by WLOX-TV in Biloxi Oct. 29 showed heavy damage was sustained by Bay Vista Church, Biloxi, with the steeple on the ground. No other Mississippi Baptist churches had been reported as damaged at publication deadline for this article.

Laura, Sally, Delta

MBDR volunteers have wrapped up their responses in association with Southern Baptist Disaster Relief (SBDR) to Hurricane Laura (Louisiana), Hurricane Sally (Alabama, Florida), and Hurricane Delta (Louisiana). Returning home Oct. 24 were Simpson County Association serving in Vinton, La., and Lee/Itawamba Association serving in DeRidder, La. Those volunteers assisted in relief efforts by providing chainsaw/debris cleanup and placing tarpaulins over damaged rooftops in hard hit areas around Lake Charles, La.

The Lee/Itawamba Association team provided leadership and experience assistance to a team of Southern Baptist laymen from Alaska who deployed to Louisiana for their first-ever hurricane response.

Also returning on Oct. 24 were teams of MBDR members who provided assessment assistance in the Jennings, La, and New

Iberia, La., areas following Hurricane Delta, and teams from Temple Church, Hattiesburg, and Jackson County Association in Pascagoula who were assisting in Robertsdale, Ala.

In the Hurricane Laura response effort, MBDR volunteers assisted Louisiana Baptists and the SBDR response with:

- Damage assessments (4,605).
- Meal preparation (419,640).
- Tarping of damaged roofs (205).
- Chainsaw/debris removal jobs (2,046).
- Mudout (total not known at present).

More than 18,818 volunteer days have been provided by the 28 affiliated state Baptist conventions/organizations. There have been 421 professions of faith recorded during the SBDR deployment.

For Hurricane Sally in Alabama and Florida, MBDR volunteers assisted Alabama Baptists and the SBDR response effort with:

- Damage assessments (2,659).
- Meal preparation (75,203).
- Tarping of damaged roofs (137).
- Chainsaw/debris removal jobs (708).

A total of 483 individuals heard a presentation of the Plan of Salvation, with 83 professions of faith recorded.

In the central Louisiana area after Hurricane Delta, MBDR and SBDR teams provided 74 damage assessments, 58,281 meals, and 55 chainsaw/debris removal jobs. Volunteer days numbered 985, and eight professions of faith have been recorded.

Church to Church

While SBDR-coordinated operations are expected to wrap up by Nov. 1, long term recovery work will continue in the days, weeks, months, and years ahead. Churches interested in long term recovery partnerships with Louisiana Baptist Convention (LBC) churches may contact the LBC Church to Church Assistance Program at louisianabaptists.org/churches-helping-churches.

Call for Volunteers

Credentialed MBDR 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 developing hurricane conditions, visit nhc.noaa.gov.

Donations

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 are tax deductible and 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 purchase of needed materials in bulk, allowing for the efficient storage and distribution of large quantities of critical supplies using pallets and forklifts and thereby reducing the

time needed to get the supplies to the hardest hit areas.

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.

Pray

Please be in prayer for the victims of these storms as they pick up the pieces of their lives, for the dedicated volunteers who may be deployed yet again after Zeta landfall, and for discipleship of the new Christians who have come to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.



HOT WORK – Volunteers with Jackson County Association Disaster Relief, responding in Moss Bluff, La., after Hurricane Laura's landfall in late August, take a break from their ministry work to pose for a team photograph. (Photo by John H. Watson)