

Mississippi Baptists prepare for tropical weather season

By Tanner Cade

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Mississippi Baptists along the Gulf Coast stand prepared for tropical weather season.

In recent weeks, Hubert Yates, Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief director, took steps to make sure the coastal areas are prepared in the event a tropical system makes landfall on Mississippi soil.

“We regularly insure the readiness of our equipment, check our communication systems with our volunteers, and insure coordination with our churches and associations that are most likely to be impacted,” said Yates. “These are things that we do year round because of the multitude of potential disasters that we face but ramp up as we enter the hurricane season, especially for the South MS Counties.”

The six counties in the coastal region are served by four associations: Jackson County Baptist Association, Gulf Coast Baptist Association, George/Greene Baptist Association, and Pearl River County Baptist Association. During tropical events, other associations in South Mississippi are also pulled into the conversation as needed for assistance depending on the determined need.

“Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief (MSBDR) leadership recently met with the Associational Mission Strategist (AMS) from these areas to continue work on a new three year plan that seeks to guide our response to a storm,” stated Yates. “Churches are being contacted and consultation meetings are planned about the availability of their facilities and locations for feeding, housing, and operational capabilities

in support of a hurricane response. The churches will be surveyed to identify the capability and capacity of each site.”

Preparation conversations are an expectation given the geographical location and historical experiences of residents in this area of the state.

“We encourage all churches in Jackson County to have a disaster relief plan,” expressed Philip Price, Jackson County Baptist association AMS. “If possible, we ask congregations to consider if their facilities could serve as a shelter for displaced persons and/or disaster relief volunteers. Since Katrina, many of the churches in the JCBA saw the value of having showers and commercial kitchens to aid disaster victims and recovery teams.”

Brian Rushing is currently starting his second year as the AMS for the Gulf Coast Baptist Association and has already taken note of the need for new locations and more credentialed volunteers for Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief.

“I went through the training this spring so that I will be credentialed and more available to help. I hope to be able to encourage others to do the same,” said Rushing. “Going through several hurricanes in the past, including the clean-up and rebuild work after Katrina, I have experienced the great blessing of Disaster Relief teams. Therefore, I hope to help Chip Williams (GCBA regional coordinator) and Hubert rebuild our disaster relief teams so that we will be ready to respond to local chainsaw, mudout, and tarping needs.”

The benefits of a well-structured relief effort allow opportunities for successful partnerships. Yates focuses efforts on Mississippi soil but also includes a strategy for helping across all coastal regions from Texas to Florida. At the same time, fellow state conventions inland are ready to drive South to help in our time of need.

“Because of the potential size and scope of hurricanes, our cooperative response brings in our sister SBC DR entities from around the Southeast and across the nation,” said Yates. “ We all work together to meet the needs of the larger events.”

“This team approach to ministry is what Baptists are all about,” said Price.” The Cooperative Program is not about raising money. It is about getting resources where they are needed to show people the love of Christ.”

Coordinating efforts for the natural disaster of hurricanes allows Mississippi Baptists to meet physical needs which quickly opens the door to meeting spiritual needs.

“When disaster relief teams go in and serve in the Name of Jesus, then people often ask, “Why are y’all doing this for me?” And this question opens the doors for people to hear the gospel and be saved,” said Rushing. “Therefore, disaster relief work is a key resource for us to use to care for people who are made in God’s image. We care for their temporary physical needs and we care for their eternal spiritual ones.”

Year-round, Yates helps Mississippi Baptists understand the need for preparing for natural disasters and helps train teams. [Click here](#) for a detailed list of how MSBDR provides opportunities for preparation and response.

Mississippi Baptists can help during hurricane relief by giving and praying.

Faithful giving through the Cooperative Program, Margaret Lackey State Offering, and designated gifts to MS Baptist Disaster Relief operations has enabled MSBDR to train over 1800 currently credentialed volunteers, obtain equipment that provides the capability of preparing over 20,000 meals per day, and conduct tarping, chainsaw, debris removal and flood recovery operations. Because of your giving, MSBDR can immediately respond to requests for assistance and bring help, hope, and healing in the name of Jesus following a disaster.

Read more about supporting relief efforts through praying and giving by [clicking here](#).