

Mississippi Baptist volunteers respond to destruction left by tornadoes, storms

By Tony Martin
Associate Editor

A broad swath of tornadic storms passed through Mississippi on May 2, followed by another round May 4. Volunteers affiliated with Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief (MBDR) were quick to respond.



Yates

Teams from Calhoun Association in Calhoun City, along with the Chickasaw Association Baptist Brotherhood Emergency Response Team from Houston and a crew from Emmanuel Church in Grenada have begun cleanup operations in Calhoun City, according to Hubert Yates, Director of Disaster Relief for the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board in Jackson.

An MBDR-affiliated team from Rankin Association is also assisting First Church, Terry, volunteers with damage in the Byram/Terry areas of Hinds County, Yates said.

“Teams responded in Hinds, Rankin, Yazoo, Holmes, Calhoun, Pontotoc, Lee, and Itawamba counties,” Yates said. “We had the most work to do in Calhoun County. There were about 35-40

homes damaged, and ten businesses. It was primarily trees down and roof damage.

“The [National Weather Service] did say the tornado was a strong EF-1. That was the beneficial thing – they were big tornadoes as far as the size, but they had low winds. They were big but they weren’t strong.”

Tornadoes are measured on the Enhanced Fujita (EF) Scale, which rates tornadoes from one to five based on estimated wind speeds and related damage with five being the most severe.

Metro Jackson and several other areas across the state experienced a round of high winds and spin-up tornadoes on May 4. Numerous downed trees were reported across a wide area. MBDR is beginning assessment operations to determine needed activity in the days that are ahead, Yates said.

Some local MBDR-affiliated church teams are assisting their members with downed tree cleanup. The need for chainsaw operations and placing tarps over damaged roofs is expected in coming days.

“Our crews did just exactly what they needed to do in Calhoun County,” Yates said. “Local crews jumped in there, assessed, prioritized, and began helping people. They were already working by the time I got there. That’s the way it’s supposed to work.”

Yates said the three volunteer groups in the northeast area of the state are still working. “We plan for the big events, but we have many more small events like what happened [May 2]. It’s not going to involve bringing in workers from other places, but if they have a local team they can do local ministry. That’s where the majority of the work is.

“The local church is uniquely suited to do disaster ministry,” Yates pointed out.

Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief ministries are supported by gifts to the Lord through the Mississippi Cooperative Program. For more information on MBDR ministries, contact Yates at hyates@mbcb.org.