

Tornadoes wreak havoc in Tylertown

*By Tony Martin
Editor*

TYLERTOWN, Miss. – Tornadoes struck Mississippi on March 14 and 15, leaving a path of destruction. In Tylertown and the surrounding area, homes and businesses were destroyed, lives were upended, and four people were killed.

According to Hubert Yates, director of the Disaster Relief Department at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, the storms caused damage in multiple counties.

“We’re assessing multiple counties with damage, including Grenada, Leflore, Sharkey, Issaquena, Pike, Walthall, Lawrence, Jefferson Davis, Covington, Smith, Simpson, Jasper, Clarke, and Lamar,” Yates said. “Our response is focusing on the three most concentrated damage sites: Elliott in Grenada County, Taylorsville in Smith County, and Tylertown in Walthall County.



Sandy Henderson, a volunteer from Pearl River Association, cleans debris off a roof of a home damaged in the March 15 tornadoes near Tylertown. (Photo credit: Tony Martin)

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Carl Myers, retired associational mission strategist for the Pearl River Association, served as the Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief "blue cap" in Tylertown, coordinating the on-site response.

As of March 17, the MSBDR had completed initial assessment interviews and visits with local emergency management officials, including the Mississippi Emergency Management

Agency (MEMA), associational and church leaders. At that time, the organization anticipated receiving approximately 40 additional requests for assistance. There were 12 active requests for help.

“We got started with sending out Temple Church [Hattiesburg] yesterday,” Myers said. “Their chainsaw team found a destroyed street and they worked all day yesterday. I would say they did probably about 10 locations or 10 jobs, and that was from inside the city limits. Then today, we’re working with two assessor teams, and they’re from Flora Church. We’ve got them working southwest and northeast of Tylertown.”

Salem Church, located in the Salem community northwest of Tylertown, sustained roof damage and lost its steeple. No injuries were reported.

Governor Visits Tornado Zone

Gov. Tate Reeves toured the damage in Tylertown and spoke briefly at Tylertown Church.

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ppCarl Myers (left), who is heading the disaster relief
i response in Tylertown, meets with Mississippi Governor Tate
thReeves (center) at Tylertown Church. (Photo credit: Tony
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“It’s really a difficult time, but during these times, we also see the best of Mississippians – people getting up and helping themselves and helping their neighbors,” Reeves continued. “And I’ll tell you, those individuals that are situated throughout this mobile command center give me inspiration to do my job. And I see the volunteers that are here that just show up – may or may not know anybody in the community – the Red Cross, the Baptist associations, that are just here to help.”

Also on Monday, response teams were present from the Lincoln County Association, including Pike Association and First Church, Brookhaven, as well as the Pearl River Association.

Tornado Ratings and Path

The National Weather Service confirmed that one tornado, which affected Pike, Walthall, Marion, Jefferson Davis, and Covington counties, was rated an EF4 with winds reaching 170 mph. The tornado remained on the ground for 65.2 miles.

Another tornado that struck Walthall and Marion counties was rated an EF3, with winds of 140 mph. It tracked 24.4 miles.

Watch The Baptist Record for more updates.