

# TBM trains Mexico's top-ranking officials in disaster response

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*Texas Baptist Communications*

JUAREZ, Mexico—The ongoing partnership between Baptists in Texas and Mexico led to an opportunity to provide disaster response training for top-ranking Mexican government officials.

Texas Baptist Men volunteers also helped equip Mexican leaders and pastors for future emergencies through the help of three Baptist churches in Juarez.

TBM Director of Disaster Relief Gary Smith and Hispanic Consultant Ed Alvarado led the first training event in Juarez, May 15-18, for high-ranking Mexican government officials, pastors and church leaders. Last year, TBM and the Baptist General Convention of Texas helped establish a similar disaster relief program in Brazil.

“The pastor of one of the Baptist churches had a vision,” Smith said. “After he saw how the Texas Baptist Men volunteers responded to flooding in his

community last year, he realized the need for disaster relief training.”

The training event in Juarez was part of an ongoing and growing Texas-Mexico relationship that also involves water purification projects begun in previous years. Dexton Shores, director of BGCT border/Mexico missions, who assisted TBM volunteers in delivering more than 250 ceramic water filters to pastors and residents in Mexico, will continue working with the country’s leaders.

“This time we’re trying to do a command communications center, whereby if there’s any disaster in Mexico, first responders and officials would call the Juarez center, and it would communicate with Dallas TBM leaders, and deploy disaster relief crews where they are needed,” Alvarado said.

The TBM effort to help improve coordination and response to catastrophic events like the deadly Piedras Negras tornado could strengthen the role of Christians and save the government thousands of dollars, he noted.

BGCT Missions Team Leader Josué Valerio stressed the mission “will open doors in Mexico” and emphasized it’s not just “a Texas outreach, but a national Baptist” ministry effort.

“It validates the pastor’s ministry and position in the community,” Valerio said. “The government is acknowledging the Baptist ministry in its city. This opens the door for a greater ministry and lifts up the name of Christ.”

By developing a disaster relief organization, the group could not only strengthen the work of Mexican Christians, but also bring together congregations to help people in need, he added. The team also believes that disaster relief training would supplement Mexico’s emergency responders.

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