

Hurricane damages more than 100 Louisiana Baptist churches

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ALEXANDRIA, La. (BP)—Hurricane Laura's 140 mph winds considered nothing sacred, including houses of worship.

John Hebert, director of missions and ministries for Louisiana Baptists, reported 107 Louisiana Baptist churches sustained damage ranging from minor to catastrophic—and some may not open their doors again.

"We've seen reports indicating as many as 140 churches sustained damage of some nature, but we've been able to address some of those needs, which has brought the total down to 107," Hebert said.

Louisiana Baptist state missions staff spent most of the week immediately after Hurricane Laura's landfall in the state calling and visiting pastors and churches across the state trying to get an idea of the severity and scope of the damage.

Steve Horn, executive director for Louisiana Baptists, has visited many of the affected areas to encourage local pastors and offer them assistance.

"Our calls and visits are showing 43 Louisiana Baptist pastors sustained damage to their homes in addition to their churches," Horn said. "Unfortunately, it appears that around 10 of those may be a total loss.

"Pastors are busy helping their members and assisting their communities while attempting to address their own damage as well. To say they are stretched thin is an understatement at best."

As reports come in, Hebert said, Louisiana Baptists categorize them according to the severity of the damage.

“Level 3 is for the buildings that have sustained the most damage,” he said. “This includes roofs that are collapsed or missing, large holes in the roofs and extensive water damage resulting from those roof issues.

“Level 2 reflects those with moderate damage including smaller holes in the roof, blown out windows and subsequent water damage. Level 1 is for those who have the least amount of damage.”

As of Sept. 9, the state convention reported 38 churches with Level 3 damages, 34 in the Level 2 category and 35 assigned to Level 1.

“We are grateful for all of our state convention, national and local church partners that are assisting in the recovery effort,” Horn added. “While Laura has faded from the headlines, she remains front and center for those of us in Louisiana, and will for months to come.”

John Kyle is director of communications for Louisiana Baptists.