

# TBM offers help and hope after Arkansas tornado

April 5, 2023

JACKSONVILLE, Ark.—A tornado plowed through Arkansas west and north of Little Rock Friday afternoon. The next day, more than 80 Texas Baptist Men volunteers from 15 units across Texas started arriving to help.



Less than 48 hours after a tornado plowed through Arkansas, TBM chainsaw volunteers were on the scene, working to removed fallen trees from the roofs of homes. (TBM Photo by Ferrell Foster)

The tornado hit in pockets stretching about 25 miles, and TBM is responding to the affected area from Sherwood to Cabot. Chainsaw crews started Sunday and continue to work.

“We are working near the tail end of the damage,” said Mike Mitchell, TBM on-site leader of the effort. “The tornado didn’t leave a wide path in this area, but the destruction is severe, and the sting of loss is great for those homeowners that have been impacted.”

TBM also has shower/laundry, electronic support and asset protection teams on site at Second Baptist Church of Jacksonville.

The TBM feeding unit was dismissed late Wednesday after disaster response officials in Arkansas decided to consolidate feeding operations to one kitchen.

One local woman, Brittney Conley, showed up and worked with the food preparation team. She loved working with the TBM volunteers.

“They have all of the positive work ethic and the energy, and they make it fun,” Conley said.

More rain fell in the impacted area Wednesday, and storm-warning sirens blared midday, sending chainsaw teams for temporary cover.

“Conditions are muddy, and this is challenging for our chainsaw crews,” Mitchell said. “But these teams are very effective and highly skilled.”

The crews from East Texas and Katy are expected to rotate out this weekend, with other teams expected to take over.

## **‘Connecting with a lot of people’**

David O’Dell, pastor of the host church, expressed thanks for the TBM effort.



TBM volunteers load insulated containers with hot meals for delivery to people affected by a tornado that roared through Arkansas. (TBM Photo by Ferrell Foster)

“We are so grateful to see the Texas Baptist men and women coming here this week, serving meals, cutting trees down, and providing resources to our community, and helping them after this tornado,” he said.

O’Dell told of visiting one of the TBM chainsaw teams on site.

“They were cutting down a tree, and when it was over, we circled up and prayed with the homeowner,” he said.

Then, back at the church property, a car pulled into the parking lot and “one of the ladies with the Texas Baptist group was able to share the gospel with them. Both of those ladies prayed to receive Christ, and now we’re connecting them with our church,” O’Dell continued.

“So, to see the group here connecting in our community with physical needs, with chainsaws and trees, but also spiritual needs, praying with people and sharing the gospel. It’s incredible.

“Our church is passionate about reaching out to our community in the city of Jacksonville and various other ministries, but what’s happened now is that we’re able to connect with a lot of people in a variety of ways. It’s just wonderful to see the seeds that are being planted, and we’re going to get to till the ground and fertilize and harvest and see the fruit from it.”

Mitchell said it was unsure how long the TBM crews would be in Arkansas, adding he expects the initial chainsaw crews to rotate out in coming days.