

TBM expects ‘a month’s worth of work’ after hurricane

September 2, 2020

ORANGE—Ryan Chandler has a long road ahead of him. He may have been more than 300 miles away when Hurricane Laura hit, but he sees its impact daily.



Although his home sustained damage, Pastor Ryan Chandler remains thankful—particularly for the work of TBM volunteers serving in his community. (TBM Photo / Rand Jenkins)

Chandler, the pastor of Trinity Baptist Church in Orange, doesn’t even have to leave home. The storm toppled trees around his house, including one that punctured his roof. He doesn’t have electricity yet, and his ceiling leaks.

“It hurts you emotionally,” he said. “We cried a little bit, but we realized how fortunate we were. It could have been much worse.”

The first wave of help came when area residents returned to their homes after mandatory evacuations. Among them was church member and TBM volunteer Rocky Mize. He rallied a few other TBM volunteers who grabbed their chainsaws and went to work. One of their first stops was their pastor's house.

"As soon as they heard I had a tree in my house, they said: 'We're on the way. We're coming. We'll be there first chance we get,'" Chandler recalled.

Though Texas did not take the brunt of the hurricane's force, Southeast Texas was affected significantly. Electricity remains out in many places. Fuel is scarce. Some cities still do not have clean water. People are searching for help.

"As we drive around, Orange is littered with trees all over the place," Chandler said. "It's amazing that had they fallen five feet this way or another way, it could have been much, much worse."



TBM chainsaw crews are working in Orange and the surrounding area.
(TBM Photo / Rand Jenkins)

Four TBM chainsaw teams, four assessor teams, a food-service team, a shower/laundry team, an incident management team and chaplains are serving in and around Orange.

“The days ahead will be challenging,” TBM Chief Executive Officer Mickey Lenamon said. “But these are the kinds of days in which God calls TBM to serve. Volunteers will lift spirits as they lift limbs. They will help people do what they could not do on their own. And at each house, God will work in small moments to transform lives.”

The need is so great, TBM is opening an additional site at East Texas Baptist Encampment in Newton County that will allow teams to serve a wider area.

“We have a month’s worth of work here,” TBM Interim Director of Disaster Relief David Wells said.



Within a few days after Hurricane Laura hit Southeast Texas, TBM chainsaw crews already had 265 work orders in the Orange area. (TBM Photo / Rand Jenkins)

“After a few days, we have 265 work orders just in Orange. That typically

doesn't happen until later in this process. TBM volunteers are working hard. Their spirit is strong, and they're ready to serve the Lord."

By Sept. 2, parts of Orange had limited access to electricity, powered by generators. Grocery stores began reopening.

Chandler expressed thanks to TBM teams who continue helping his church members, as well as helping him connect with people in the community. Those meetings lay the groundwork for future outreach. By first meeting needs, people across the region are more receptive to hearing the gospel.

"Our main purpose is not just to come cut the trees," Mize told a radio station. "We come to share the message of Jesus with people. We come to offer help and healing."

To support TBM disaster relief financially, give online at TBM.org/donate or mail a check to Texas Baptist Men, 5351 Catron Drive, Dallas 75227.