

Texas Baptists respond in wake of North Texas tornadoes

December 29, 2015

GARLAND—Texas Baptists responded rapidly when multiple tornadoes swept through North Texas the day after Christmas, claiming 11 lives and damaging or destroying more than 1,400 homes in Ellis, Dallas, Rockwall and Collin counties.



Texas Baptist Men disaster relief volunteers from Collin Baptist Association clear debris from a neighborhood in southeast Garland. (Photo / Ken Camp)A single tornado produced a continuous path of destruction 13 miles long from Garland through eastern Rowlett. Texas Baptist Men set up a disaster relief incident command post at First Baptist Church in Rowlett, and the church collected diapers, plastic tubs, gift cards and other items for their affected neighbors. At least 600 homes in Rowlett sustained serious damage or were destroyed.

By Jan. 3, TBM had 17 units working in the area, with about 80 trained volunteers serving in a variety of capacities.



Texas Baptist Men chainsaw operators from Collin Baptist Association use a polesaw to remove damaged limbs from the tree of a southeast Garland resident. (Photo / Ken Camp) Texas Baptist Men chainsaw crews from Collin Baptist Association and Lake Pointe Church in Rockwall began work in Garland and Rowlett, serving in cooperation with fire department personnel to clear felled trees and remove limbs. In the first two days, the TBM crews completed 15 chainsaw jobs. Later, a chainsaw crew from Denton Baptist Association joined the effort.

Volunteers from multiple churches in Collin County focused first on a neighborhood south of Interstate 30 in southeastern Garland, where an E4 tornado packed wind speeds greater than 165 miles per hour.

Additional TBM volunteers and Ellis Baptist Association and Denton Baptist Association distributed cardboard boxes to residents to help them gather scattered possessions.

Another team covered damaged roofs with blue tarps, while other volunteers operated two skid-steers to move heavy debris. TBM also provided an all-terrain-vehicle to assessment teams, after the mayor of Rowlett requested a street-by-street canvassing of affected areas.

TBM set up the Hill Country Baptist Association Living Hope Baptist Church in Garland, and the shower and laundry unit from Ellis Baptist Association also was called into duty.

A crew from Pineywoods Baptist Camp set up two portable light towers.

Terry Henderson, TBM state disaster relief director, met Dec. 29 with the Garland emergency response task force to discuss setting up a volunteer reception center where potential workers could receive short-term assignments as the city identified needs.

Mount Hebron Missionary Baptist Church—which already was serving a local donation and distribution site—and South Garland Baptist Church both were considered as possible locations. However, the cities of Garland and Rowlett decided instead to establish a joint disaster management resource center at the Granger Recreation Center at 1310 W. Ave. F in Garland. In addition to serving as a volunteer reception center, it also operates as a multi-agency resource center and donation site.



Texas Baptist Men disaster relief volunteers L.S. Palmer and Wendell Romans from Collin Baptist Association check their list of requests from homeowners for assistance. (Photo / Ken Camp) David Scott, director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas disaster recovery program, worked closely with Henderson to coordinate plans for long-term response, including recovery and rebuilding projects.

To contribute to TBM disaster relief, click [here](#) or send a check designated “disaster relief” to Texas Baptist Men, 5351 Catron, Dallas 75227.

To contribute to long-term recovery efforts, mail checks to Texas Baptists’ Disaster Recovery, 7557 Rambler Rd., Suite 1100, Dallas 75231-2310 or click [here](#).

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