

Texas-made water filter operating in Turkey

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Some information in this story is kept intentionally vague for security reasons and to promote the effectiveness of the work being done.

A Texas Baptist Men-led team in Turkey has set up the first of two water filter systems shipped from Texas to the earthquake-ravaged area this past week.



A Texas Baptist Men-led team in Turkey sets up the first of two water filter systems shipped from Texas to the earthquake-ravaged area. (TBM Photo)

The second will be on line soon, and supplies to build eight more systems are being shipped from Istanbul, Turkey.

TBM's water specialist and four Missouri Disaster Relief leaders arrived in Turkey on Feb. 24. They are housed almost three hours away from the quake epicenter and have experienced some aftershocks, but all is going well, the TBM representative said.

“This is by far the worst disaster I have ever seen, and I went to New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. This destruction far exceeds any of that,” the water specialist said.

“Overall, the need is great, but the United Nations, Turkish and other relief organizations have done a good job of handling the situation, removing bodies in a manner that honors people’s privacy. ... The things that need addressing right now are clean water, hygiene and trash removal.”

The team installed the first filter in a community center being used as a shelter where about 800 people can eat, take showers, and obtain medical care and medicine. They expect to install the second Texas-built filter on Feb. 27, while awaiting shipment of the supplies from Istanbul.

TBM Executive Director Mickey Lenamon asked Texas Baptists to pray for this “critical, life-saving ministry in a devastated area.”

Lenamon specifically requested prayer:

- For the Turkish people. “This situation has rocked them to the core. May they sense the comfort and presence of the Lord.”
- For supplies. “The team has ordered pieces for eight more filters. Please pray the items arrive from Istanbul quickly and the team gets clearance to install them in the areas of most need.”
- For safety. “One aftershock already has occurred while the team was on the ground. Pray for protection for the Turkish people, as well as the volunteer team.”

TBM’s water specialist reported the team’s work has been productive, even though the plumbing fittings used in Turkey are different from those in Texas.

“We ran around to hardware stores finding what we needed,” he said.

Already, some Turkish people have been trained in how to set up the filtration system, and more are to be trained in the coming week, including some from Syria.

The damage in Turkey has given the TBM water specialist his first personal experience of earthquake damage.

“The destruction is a little more isolated than I expected,” he said. “All of the buildings in a four-block area might be flattened, but then you go several blocks where the buildings did not collapse. Then, you come upon another devastated area.

“The frequency of the shockwaves affects the amount of damage, and frequency happens in waves. ... It doesn’t get every building... You’ll have clusters of buildings that fell in the quake.”

The team is not explicitly sharing its faith, but they are working with in-country Christian groups.

“Most of our contacts are known to be part of a Christian group. So, others understand that our faith motivates our care for them.”