Three Adventist Members Die in Southern Storms - Report #3

Submitted by the Southern Union Conference
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Two members of the Ownbey Chapel Seventh-day Adventist Church in North East Alabama and one member of the Apison Seventh-day Adventist Church in Southeastern Tennessee were tragically killed during Wednesday’s tornadic outbreak that ripped across the southern United States on April 27. The victims were members of the Gulf States and Georgia-Cumberland Conferences respectively. The church family is saddened by this news and the loss of these members.

Throughout the Southern Union, there are also numerous reports of members’ homes and church property being damaged and destroyed.

Some of the initial reports are indicating the following:

Most Recent:
• In Huntsville, Alabama, 3 homes belonging to members of the First Seventh-day Adventist Church homes were destroyed, at least 7 more sustained severe damage
• In Huntsville, Alabama, the New Life Seventh-day Adventist church did not suffer damage, but two members lost their homes
• In Harvest, Alabama, the Harvest Seventh-day Adventist Church Sabbath School house received some damage, however all members’ homes and the church are ok
• In Tuscaloosa, Alabama, at least 6 members of the South Central Conference lost their homes. Several more received damage. One member has been hospitalized.
• In Huntsville, Alabama, the Oakwood University Seventh-day Adventist Church did not suffer...
damages, but several members lost their homes
• In Madison, Alabama, the Madison Mission Seventh-day Adventist Church is ok, but a couple of members lost homes and one member received damage to her front porch
• In northern Mississippi, all members, pastors, and churches in the South Central Conference are ok
• In Chattanooga, Tennessee, 1 member of the Orchard Park Seventh-day Adventist Church received damage to their home

Previously Reported:
• In Pleasant Grove, Alabama, two Adventist families homes' were destroyed. Another family had damage to their home. There are no reports of injuries
• In Jackson, Mississippi area, one members' farm was heavily damaged, but the home only received minor damage
• In Piedmont, Alabama, the Piedmont Seventh-day Adventist Church was destroyed
• In Huntsville, Alabama, a small tornado touched down a few hundred yards from the home of Pastor Chris Barr’s house, but minimal damage was caused to the home. Chris Barr is the pastor of the Huntsville Central Seventh-day Adventist Church and says “Communications are difficult and no gas is available.”
• Several members’ homes in the Huntsville, Alabama area have been damaged or destroyed.
• In Huntsville, Alabama, the 3rd Quinquennial and 24th Regular Session of the South Central Conference has been postponed
• In Tuscaloosa, 2 Adventist families homes' were totally destroyed, several others were damaged
• In Tuscaloosa, Barbara Barnes, Adventist Community Services Co-Director for South Central Conference, was in a credit union when the tornado struck. The building next door was destroyed, she is ok
• In Guntersville, Alabama, Pastor Arroyo’s home was damaged, but his family is ok.
• In Ooltewah, TN, Ed Wright, president of the Georgia-Cumberland Conference sustained damage to his home
• Numerous other families in the Collegedale area have had their homes damaged or destroyed

Despite the widespread devastation, Seventh-day Adventist's are starting to provide assistance as the opportunities arise:

Most Recent:
• The Samaritan Center in Ooltewah, TN has partnered with Adventist Community Services Disaster Response in Ooltewah, TN in distributing cardboard boxes, gloves, trash bags, and flashlights
• Volunteers from Ooltewah Seventh-day Adventist Church made about 100 sack lunches. They worked with the Salvation Army in Bradley County for distribution
• Apison Seventh-day Adventist Church members are providing food to residents of the Apison area
• A group from Johnson City came with chainsaws to the Collegedale area and have been helping Adventist and community members

Previously Reported:
• McDonald Road Pathfinders are feeding emergency workers and affected families at Apison Elementary School. This is the staging location for clean-up and recovery efforts in Apison, TN
• The First Church of Huntsville Alabama fed members of their church and community on Saturday, April 30
• McDonald Road Pathfinders fed emergency workers at Apison Elementary School. This was the staging location for clean-up and recovery efforts in Apison, TN
• Atlanta Adventist Academy is sending a group of students to the Apison area to help with...
clean-up this weekend
• Southern Adventist University has offered the Hamilton County Emergency Management Agency the use of dorm rooms for temporary housing starting Sunday, May 1
• Georgia-Cumberland Conference is working with emergency management officials to establish warehouse operations in Georgia and Tennessee. The locations will be made available once confirmed
• South Central Conference is working with emergency management officials to establish warehouse operations in Alabama. The location will be made available once confirmed

“Our prayers and condolences are with all those in the Southern Union who have been affected by these storms,” says Pastor Gordon Retzer, president of the Southern Union Conference territory. “In this time of turmoil, we can be comforted by God’s grace and mercies.”

Church officials in the affected areas are continuing to work with local and state emergency officials to continue assessing the situation in their local communities and determining where their assistance will be most needed, but are experiencing difficulties caused by numerous downed trees and power lines blocking roads, limited electricity, and unreliable phone service.

Adventist Community Services is accepting monetary donations to assist with the response efforts. You can donate on www.communityservices.org. You can send by mail to Adventist Community Services, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904

Terry Haight, Adventist Community Services Disaster Response says, “Please continue to pray for the people who have been victimized by this disaster. As I view these, I wonder how I would feel if I were faced with the same situation.”

Updated press releases will be issued as information is available.

Photos are starting to come in and are available at www.southernunion.com.