

Local Help in the Gulf, Haiti

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Samaritan's Purse is on the still-soggy ground soaked by last week's visit of Hurricane Isaac, responding to help victims with wind damage and flooding in Biloxi, Miss., New Orleans and Haiti. In Louisiana, Brent Graybeal of Samaritan's Purse says most of what they're dealing with is flood damage, "Predominantly what we're seeing is flood damage in the homes. Here in LaPlace, flood water levels were around four feet in some of the homes."

A convoy of heavy equipment and vehicles departed early yesterday morning from the Samaritan's Purse U.S. Disaster Relief headquarters in North Wilkesboro, N.C. This included two tractor-trailer units loaded with tarps, chainsaws, generators and other emergency supplies. Each of these Disaster Relief Units can function as a self-supporting operations center for volunteers and staff. Once on-site in Biloxi and New Orleans, Samaritan's Purse will coordinate teams of staff and volunteers to help clear debris, remove downed trees and salvage personal items. Franklin Graham, president and CEO of Samaritan's Purse said his organization helped thousands of homeowners seven years ago after Hurricane Katrina pounded some of the same areas now facing more devastation, and said, "We want these homeowners to know that they are loved and not forgotten, and we will do what we can to help." And the target of the Samaritan's Purse effort is residents who had either no insurance or no flood insurance, with teams working to repair and restore, "Ripping out the damaged flooring, the sheetrock, the insulation, removing the furniture and appliances that will no longer be able to be used. And once all that's done we're going to go in and spray for mold."

And Graybeal said that they could use other volunteers in the region, and for anyone who would like to help to contact the local organization in Boone.

The emergency response began earlier in the week in Haiti when the organization loaded a DC-3 plane in Florida full of heavy-duty plastic for temporary shelter and more than 700 hygiene kits to help storm victims in Haiti who lost everything. Right now, Samaritan's Purse staff members are in the country working to provide clean drinking water in areas where the water source is unsafe due to flooded wells. So far, the organization has decontaminated more than a dozen storm-flooded wells, and teams are providing communities with water purification.

Photos; Samaritan's Purse