

Haiti Disaster Relief - SCBC Updates
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SC Disaster Relief preparing for 'years and years' of aid to Haiti;
South Carolina Medical Team expected to be in Haiti within a week

South Carolina Baptist Disaster Relief expects to send the first wave of 10 medical personnel of its 250-member Medical Team to Haiti within a week, pending the report of a Southern Baptist Convention Disaster Relief assessment team currently on site in the devastated country.

Cliff Satterwhite, director, Disaster Relief Group, SCBC, said today the assessment team has landed in the Dominican Republic and is in Haiti. The assessment team will be meeting with Florida Baptist Convention staff and partners, developing a Southern Baptist plan and protocol for moving volunteers and aid into the country. Florida Baptists have long had a presence in Haiti, starting 842 churches in the past 15 years, and providing salary for seven Haitian missionaries and 15 additional Haitians who work in the convention's guest house and on its security force. There are 305 Haitian churches in the Florida convention.

"Working with Florida Baptists on site, the assessment team must evaluate security, housing and safety issues before we can send volunteers," Satterwhite said. "Right now, this is a very dangerous part of the world."

Satterwhite said Red 24, a global security specialist organization, has placed Haiti in its category of places "too dangerous to go into" because of devastation and violence in the aftermath of last week's earthquake.

"We want people to understand that, currently, this is not a mission trip location," Satterwhite said. "This is Disaster Relief Recovery Area, where there is extreme heat, dead bodies, mosquitoes, limited food sources, and primitive housing if even there is housing. Once the area is safe, South Carolina Baptists will be sending teams for years and years as part of the recovery effort. We will need a lot of grief counselors because of the devastation."

Satterwhite said South Carolina Baptist Disaster Relief, one of the historic leaders in Southern Baptist Disaster Relief ministry, follows the national convention's protocol.

"The Baptist Global Response (BGR) is the disaster relief arm of the International Mission Board," Satterwhite said. "We have been faithful supporters of this effort for years and have responded across the globe. Each afternoon, I am part of a conference call that includes my counterparts at state conventions, Disaster Relief at the North American Mission Board, and Baptist Global Response. There is a coordinated system to our response and it occurs in a timely, orderly way so that we aren't rushing in and creating additional problems. The current on-site assessment team is part of this system."

Donations may be mailed to South Carolina Baptist Convention, Disaster Relief Fund, 190 Stoneridge Drive, Columbia, SC 29210. Donations may be designated for Haiti, and 100 percent of funds will be used in Haiti relief.

"I know people's hearts are broken here in South Carolina," Satterwhite said. "We all see the news reports and the photographs. We feel the urgency to get down there and help. Southern Baptist and South Carolina Baptist leaders are working tirelessly to get inside quickly, safely and orderly."