

# Answering the call

Boeing volunteers were quick to respond when tornadoes hit Alabama

By Patricia Soloveichik and photos by Eric Shindelbower

When tornadoes cut a 130-mile (210-kilometer) path of destruction across north Alabama, leaving behind ravaged communities, shock and despair, the heart-wrenching loss of homes and loved ones galvanized thousands of volunteers.

Boeing employees were among the first to respond. "The area looks like it's been through a really long war," said Boeing volunteer Leslie Bradley, describing the neighborhoods hit near Boeing Huntsville Jetplex facilities in north Alabama. Leafless sticks were all that was left of neighborhoods that had once been green with mature trees and populated by homes.

In one day, more than 100 Boeing volunteers showed up in their signature blue T-shirts with little more than 24 hours' notice to perform backbreaking work for shifts as long as eight hours.

Employees returned again and again. And they made a difference.

"It's extraordinary how much determination, commitment and old-fashioned hard work can achieve," said Tony Jones, vice presi-

dent of operations for Strategic Missile & Defense Systems and Huntsville site executive, surveying the neighborhoods more than a month after the storms. "I am continually amazed and impressed by the resiliency of the people here. They work together and they get the job done. That's also why they're so good at their work."

Boeing employees around the globe rallied as well, donating more than \$106,000 to help tornado victims in Alabama, in addition to a local Employees Community Fund contribution of \$20,000 and a Boeing donation of \$100,000.

Mike Gillespie, chairman of the Madison County Commission in Alabama, who led response and recovery efforts, recently thanked Boeing for getting out in front to help. "We've always valued Boeing as an economic force and for its community spirit," Gillespie said. "But it's clearer than ever that your people truly are your most valuable asset." ■

patricia.a.soloveichik@boeing.com

The devastation in north Alabama was not the first time that Boeing employees have been affected by a natural disaster. Parts of Australia endured major flooding earlier this year, and Japan is recovering from a deadly earthquake and tsunami. To read more about how Boeing and its people have responded to these disasters both on and off the job, see Page 36 in the May 2011 issue of Frontiers and the 2010 Corporate Citizenship report online at: [www.boeing.com/companyoffices/aboutus/community/2010\\_report/delivering\\_aid.html](http://www.boeing.com/companyoffices/aboutus/community/2010_report/delivering_aid.html)

**PHOTOS:** Boeing employees from the Huntsville, Ala., site, along with family members, responded quickly and in large numbers when a neighborhood was devastated by a powerful tornado. The Boeing teams hauled debris for hours, and many returned for subsequent shifts.

