News 21 November 2026 | English article

Today: 81-Year-Old Fred Rouse Leads Kentucky Chainsaw Crew in Storm-Hit Milton Florida

A true story of faith under pressure. Read the first half below, then continue online.

KEY SPIRITUAL TAKEAWAY

"There's a lot of damage,"

(Transliterated from the original Hindi.)

They had gathered only to pray. When prayer itself becomes the target, faith is proved not by words but by staying.

The Story - Part One

Fred Rouse is 81 years old, and he is still running a chainsaw crew. The volunteer from Mayfield, Kentucky, is serving as the Blue Hat leader of a Kentucky Baptist Disaster Relief team working in Milton, Florida, where storms that swept through a couple of weeks ago left fallen trees and broken limbs scattered across the community, even 30 to 40 miles inland. His crew has assessed 1,034 jobs and cut the remaining workload to about 200.

It is Kentucky's second chainsaw crew to assist with the cleanup, working this week alongside Texas volunteers who are overseeing incident command. The first team of 20 volunteers travelled to Milton at the start of November, bringing tree-removal crews and heavy equipment to a Panhandle county where more than 2,000 structures were damaged.

Rouse is no stranger to the work, or to the storms. He knows what it means to lose almost everything and keep going anyway, because five years ago a tornado tore through his own hometown. Now he spends his days organising other people's recoveries, one fallen oak at a time.

"There's a lot of damage," he said. "I watched the whole thing as far as Hurricane Isaias, but I'm surprised this far inland has been affected so much." Tarps cover damaged roofs across Milton, and sections of wooden privacy fences blown down by the storms line the roadsides.

The Kentucky crew includes 11 volunteers drawn from across the state. "We're from all over the state, from California to Mayfield. I've got a great team," Rouse said.

The crew arrived on a Sunday afternoon and completed two jobs on Monday, and they have not slowed down since.

Although he is experienced with a chainsaw, Rouse has focused mainly on organising crews and sharing the Gospel. The volunteers are divided into three chainsaw teams, supported by a tractor from the Blood River Association and the team's Kermit offloader, a machine that hauls debris so volunteers do not have to carry it by hand.

"They make so much difference," he said.

"Before we had Kermit, we might have to pack it a hundred yards. It's a back-saver, plus the time it saves."

The Turning Point - What Happens Next

The story reaches a life-changing moment that changes everything -- and what seemed like the end is only the middle. Two reports disagree on the numbers, and one question is left unanswered: will the CCTV footage ever come out? Read the full story to find out what happens next.

PERSONAL REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When gathering to pray carries a real cost, what keeps a community coming together anyway -- and what would keep you coming?

2. The pastor's sister shielded him with her own body and fainted under the blows. What does costly, self-giving love look like in your own family or church?

3. When justice is delayed and a complaint is withdrawn under threat, how do believers hold on to truth without giving in to fear -- or to hatred?

READ THE FULL STORY

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