

# Fertilizer Plant Explosion

## Texas churches aid farm community

Story by Debra Smith and Jim Culhane  
Photos by Joshua Horsey

“Amen,” chorused a circle of volunteers and residents. They were ending a long day of work in the yard of Carol Kocian, whose family’s home had been nearly devastated by the fertilizer plant explosion a few weeks earlier. Since the disaster, Calvary Chapels in Waco, Lubbock, and South Austin, TX, had been pursuing opportunities to serve those affected. Carol’s house was located just across a field from the plant in the small farming town of West, TX.

Carol, a widow, lived in the home with her two teenage sons, two adult daughters, and two young grandsons. When a small fire began at the fertilizer plant on a mid-April evening, everyone was home except the daughters. A friend of Carol’s 17-year-old son Zachery was also visiting, and the two went together into the yard to video the fire. Although safety officials were investigating the growing hazard and evacuating the area, the family had not been informed. Carol was watching the young men from her front door when the facility exploded. The friends were thrown into the air and backwards, away from the detonation; everyone in the house was jolted high off the floor. All sustained minor injuries, though they are now fine. Because the blast destroyed the local cell phone tower, however, the daughters were unable to reach their family members for several agonizing hours. The women did not know until late that night whether all had survived.

CC Waco, located just 30 minutes south of West, immediately began seeking to serve victims. They were not alone; “We Calvary Chapels in Texas are a close-knit family,” shared Pastor Ben Martinez of northwestern Texas’ CC Lubbock. After the tragedy, which killed 15 and injured approximately 200, “The Lord put it into my heart to go help,” Ben continued. Though Lubbock is nearly six hours from Waco, “We’re connected with them,” Ben said. He called CC Waco and learned what the local needs were from Associate Pastor Charles Arriola. Under the leadership of Senior



Carol Kocian works in her yard in West, TX, alongside volunteers from Calvary Chapels throughout Texas. Carol’s home was nearly destroyed by the explosion.

Pastor Albert Fuentes, Charles has been coordinating the congregation’s explosion response. CC Lubbock then sent eastward seven men who routinely serve in their own community through their fellowship’s Love Out Loud ministry, which is designed to demonstrate Christ’s love through action.

***My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.***

1 John 3:18

In West, “We were astounded by how bad it was,” Ben testified. Also joined by CC South Austin, the believers together performed cleanup and repair for residents. They were not allowed inside Carol’s and many other homes due to structural engineers’ pronouncements of instability, but they mended her horse pasture fences, mowed people’s lawns, provided emotional support, listened to stories—and prayed with many. “Homes had bricks falling off, roofs caving in, and windows shattered,” Ben exclaimed. “The area is going to need help long term.”



Believers remove a damaged dresser and mirror set from Carol’s home.

As for Carol, Pastor Charles expressed, “She seems overwhelmed by the outpouring of love.” By continuing to serve her and others, he continued, “We just want to be Jesus’ hands and feet.” 🙌

### CC Waco, TX

[www.calvarywaco.org](http://www.calvarywaco.org)

[calvarychapelwaco@yahoo.com](mailto:calvarychapelwaco@yahoo.com)

254-297-7802