

2008 Team Member Survival Guide



"Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain." Psalm 127:1

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Greetings from El Paso, TX!

This Survival Guide contains the essential information (checklists, tips, and guidelines) that you will need to prepare for your mission trip--please read it carefully. Its information is based on over 3000 mission trips to Juarez, Mexico. If you have any questions, be sure to talk to your team leader so he/she can pass them on to us. Our goal is to answer all of your questions quickly and efficiently so that you will be well prepared for your trip.

We look forward to your arrival,

The CpC Team Coordinating Staff

Emergency Contact Number

If someone needs to contact you during your stay in Mexico, they may call (800) 819-8014. If they call after business hours, two emergency contact numbers will follow at the end of the message. These numbers should be used for emergency situations ONLY. Each staff person is equipped with a radio to receive messages; however, it is often difficult to find a phone in Mexico. This should be reserved for EMERGENCY SITUATIONS ONLY!

Medical Treatment

If someone requires medical attention, they will be taken to an emergency room in El Paso for treatment.

Cell Phones

It is possible, depending on carrier, that you will have cell phone range in Juarez. However, it is more likely that you will hit a Mexican tower. These calls can be very costly. If you need to make a call to the US from your cell phone and are hitting a Mexico tower, you will need to dial 001 (US International Code) and the number. However, we ask that cell phone use be kept to emergency situations only. This is a chance for team members to step away from "normal" life for a week and immerse themselves in the mission trip.

Time Zones

El Paso and Juarez both operate on Mountain Time. When establishing meeting times, we will always refer to Mountain Time.

Expectations of a CpC Trip

Every trip will present its own unique set of challenges. It should open your eyes to the poverty of a Third World country and at the same time reveal to you the impact a person can have on his neighbor in the name of Jesus. CpC does not have skilled laborers, only willing hands.

Your CpC Staff: Your group will be assigned to work with a Full time CpC Missionary, Volunteer, or Intern. Each of these people is trained to lead you through the house building process. Expertise and experience will vary from person to person. Each of these people is here because they love serving God and the people of Mexico. Each member of our staff has been gifted in different ways, and has a different personality and leading style. Some are talkative and outgoing, where others tend to be quieter and more reserved.

Whatever the case may be, it is important that you are supportive of your CpC Rep because each has been called to Mexico to serve the Lord. The majority of our staff and volunteers are not professional carpenters. However, we have been trained in the ins and outs of a Casas por Cristo house. **It is vital, even if you have professional builders on your team, to listen to your CpC Rep.** We build the house the way we do based on materials available in Mexico and our work with young, inexperienced teams. We appreciate your patience and flexibility.

One or two CpC representatives will be with you for the entire trip. They will guide you across the border, teach your team how to build the house, take you to the market if

time permits, and lead you back across the border. They will also stay in the church (in Juarez only) at night and eat meals with you. (You are responsible for providing meals for your CpC Rep.)

It is important to emphasize the "teach" part in the previous paragraph. The expectations that you have for your CpC Rep directly affects how your team will perceive the role of your staff. Your staff is with you strictly to teach and supervise and not to build. They are responsible for supervising twelve to twenty-five people who are doing multiple tasks at a rapid pace, without the added responsibility of building as well.

In order to minimize mistakes and increase the quality of your project, please keep this in mind. All of our Reps were team members at one time and wouldn't be here if they didn't love to do the work. But this is your trip, and they are here to make sure that it is the best possible experience -- by supervising.

It is disappointing to read evaluations at the end of the week in which team members comment that their CpC Rep didn't do any work, but just stood around and told people what to do. That means a team member didn't understand the CpC Rep's role and had a negative feeling that could have been avoided.

Meet Your Team Leader: If you would like to learn more about your CpC Rep, feel free to visit our website www.casaporcristo.org.

You should expect to get out of this trip what you invest in it. CpC trips are often the most deeply moving spiritual experiences of a team member's life.

Spanish Skills: The majority of our staff are NOT fluent in Spanish. We are all making strides to learn the language, but most of us have not had the luxury of attending a language school. We study on our own, and learn as we go along. We encourage you to bring a translator with you if you desire. In addition, we encourage each team member to study the language before they come.

They can visit www.unforgettablelanguages.com/cpc.html for a language course. Proceeds will help benefit Casas por Cristo.

The Project: You should expect to complete a house or church from the ground up. If you bring the appropriate number of people to work and allow enough time, you should not have to worry about leaving your home unfinished. We have built more than 3000 houses, and while some projects are more difficult than others due to the condition of land, no project is too difficult to finish.

It is important that you allow four full days for the project. Many teams have completed the task in three days; however, others have taken four full days. Every worksite has unique challenges, so it is important that you allow yourself enough time to finish the project. Even if you have participated in a CpC trip before, and finished in a short period of time, the new site could be more demanding and could take more time. Conditions in Mexico are unpredictable and you want to always allow enough time to finish the project.

Concrete Trucks: If you have ordered a concrete truck, Ready Mix concrete will be delivered to your worksite. However, because of road conditions and site locations, there is no guarantee that the truck will be able to deliver

the mix directly into the desired location. Your team may have to wheelbarrow it from the truck to the forms.

Additional Ministries: Although our main goal is to serve God through building homes for families, we welcome and encourage teams to participate in additional evangelistic opportunities. See the Evangelism Opportunities Guide at http://www.casasporcristo.org/forms/Evangelism_Opportunities_Guide_newformat.pdf

Please feel free to contact Scott Dewitt, Director of Spiritual Growth, for additional assistance or ideas.
sdewitt@casasporcristo.org

Summer Building Schedule...you have two options:

1. You may choose to work from approximately 7 AM to noon and from 3:30 PM until 8 PM during the summer. You will go back to your church for Siesta and have your big meal of the day. On this schedule you should expect to eat all of your meals at the church. This break time should be used to get out of the sun, take naps, and relax.

2. You may choose to work from 6 AM to 2 PM. With this schedule, you will need to take snacks and a light lunch to the worksite. Plan to eat your dinner or big meal of the day at the church. This schedule will allow you to rest and relax in the afternoon and evening.

We have found that most teams prefer the "Siesta Schedule"; however, upon meeting your CpC Rep you can discuss which plan will work best for your team.

Fall, Winter and Spring Building Schedule: During non-summer seasons you should expect to work from 8 AM to 5

PM and eat lunch at the worksite. You will eat dinner and breakfast at the church.

Must Haves

Proof of Citizenship:

* January 1, 2008 all US Citizens will be required to have an ID AND birth certificate for travel from Mexico into the United States. Passports will most likely be required starting **SUMMER OF 2008**. The DOS will publish the date of implementation at least 60 days in advance. The date of implementation has changed numerous times, but you can get up-to-date information at

http://travel.state.gov/travel/cbpmc/cbpmc_2223.html

Start planning early for 2008 and beyond.

If you are stopped at the border, you may be asked to present these documents, and without them you will not be able to move on. Don't wait until the last minute to find these things. Without them your trip could be over before it gets started.

Shots: No specific shots are required to enter Mexico. But due to the nature of our work, we advise having a current Tetanus immunization.

Packing List:

- ___ Hammer (no smaller than 12 oz.)
- ___ 25 ft. Tape Measure
- ___ Utility Knife
- ___ Carpenter's Pencil
- ___ Tool Belt or Nail Apron

- ___ Work Gloves
- ___ Safety Glasses or Sunglasses
- ___ Long Work Pants (no capris or shorts)
- ___ Work Shirts/Long-Sleeved Shirt (for working with insulation)
- ___ Sturdy Shoes or Boots
- ___ Hat or Bandanna
- ___ Insulated Water Container
- ___ Sunblock
- ___ Chapstick
- ___ Bible
- ___ Bedding (linens/sleeping bag/air mattress/cot, etc.)
- ___ Towel(s)
- ___ Flip Flops
- ___ Rain Gear (Juarez does get rain, and occasionally snow)
- ___ Earplugs (for sleeping)
- ___ Soap, Shampoo, & Other Toiletries
- ___ Flashlight*
- ___ Wet wipes*
- ___ Knee Pads* (for working on the roof, etc.)
- ___ Rubber Gloves (for stucco)*
- ___ Dust Mask (for insulation)*
- ___ Rubber boots (for concrete work)*

*While these items aren't mandatory, we have found them to be helpful.

Team members are allowed to wear shorts in Mexico. You may wear them anytime EXCEPT when you are on the worksite. You will be expected to wear long pants on the worksite. (This is for your safety and protection.) It is imperative that all shorts worn must be modest and appropriate. TANK TOPS/SLEEVELESS SHIRTS ARE

NEVER ALLOWED. If a CpC Rep feels that a team member's dress is inappropriate; they will ask you to change immediately.

Late fall, winter, and early spring tend to bring very cold temperatures. You will need to plan accordingly. (Bring jackets, hats, long-sleeved shirts, warm blankets, sleeping bags, extra socks, gloves, rain gear, etc.) Also, be prepared for the potential of snow or rain. We typically keep working in spite of weather conditions.

*You should bring a First Aid Kit for each group that is building a house!

***Do NOT Pack:**

- Tank Tops
- Sleeveless shirts
- Torn pants/Jeans
- Playing Cards/Dominos/Dice (In Mexico these are construed as signs of gambling.)

*Feel free to pack these items for your stay in El Paso, but they are not to be worn/used during your stay in Mexico.

Additionally, alcohol and tobacco products are NEVER allowed while participating in a Casas por Cristo trip. Please refrain from these activities while you are in El Paso and Juarez.

Driving In Mexico

Don't Drive After Dark: Roads in Mexico are in poor condition and inadequate lighting and road markings make it dangerous to drive after dark.

Follow your CpC Rep Closely: Do not attempt to make your own way. Avoid letting other cars into your caravan.

Mexican Police Cars: The Mexican police drive with their red and blue lights flashing at all times. Do not pull over. They will sound their siren if they need you to pull over.

At The Worksite

Preparedness: Be sure to arrive at the work site with all of the equipment that you will need. There will not be trips back to the church for forgotten items.

You will want to take toilet paper, trash bags, wet wipes, water, and snacks with you to the worksite. (Don't forget the lunches!)

Bathroom: There is a bathroom facility of some sort at each worksite. However, some may be more primitive than others. Don't forget the toilet paper!

Attitude: The most important thing to bring with you to the worksite is your good attitude. This is your opportunity to work. Many times individual tasks may not seem important or make sense in the overall plan. But everything is essential--just wait and see. You will probably be surprised how your contribution fits into the overall picture. Be ready for lots of hard work.

Animals: It is important that you do not feed or touch the animals. Many of them carry diseases, and have the potential to bite or scratch.

Stay in a group: At all times, team members must stay in a group. Do not wander off by yourself. Always let your CpC Rep and Team Leader know where you are.

Tools: Casas por Cristo provides the majority of tools you will need, but you will need to bring the tools listed in the packing list. You and your fellow team members are responsible for the tools we provide. If tools break due to normal wear and tear, we will replace them, but if they are lost or neglected, your team will be responsible for the replacement costs. Be nice to your tools and they will serve you well. When you are done using a tool, be sure to return it to the spot where you got it. This will ensure that it will be ready for the next person who needs to use it.

The CpC toolkit is equipped with the following power tools. Cement mixer, Drywall cutout tool, screw guns, drill, power saw, and generator if necessary. You are welcome to bring any additional tools, but please be aware that there is a risk that they could be damaged or stolen. We have found that extra battery powered tools are more helpful than corded tools. In addition, we do not have a policy against nail guns, but please be aware that it can potentially take work away from team members who are less skilled, and is potentially dangerous. If you do bring a nail gun, please make sure that other team members don't feel slighted, and that safety precautions are taken.

Please be aware that the team will have to load and unload all of the tools potentially multiple times every day. It is not

safe to leave the tools at the worksite; therefore they must be stored inside the church. This is another step of the building process, and should not be looked at as an annoyance. When everyone on the team does their part, it does not take more than a few minutes to complete the task.

Your Family: Every family is different. We do not require that families participate in the building process beyond having the site prepared before you arrive. We believe the house is an extension of God's grace, a free gift that demonstrates the love of Christ. However, many families are eager to help but are shy and feel like they would be in the way. If you wish to have more interaction with your family, make the effort to draw them out. Often the father of the family will be at work, but the wife and children are willing to give a hand.

Other than just helping build the home, some families like to participate and show gratitude in different ways. On occasion some families will make you a meal, and others will give team members a gift to remember them by. Be gracious, yet discerning. Most food is safely prepared, but it is okay to inquire whether drinks are made with purified water. Ask your CpC Rep if you have any questions. Most families are very careful because they want to please you. Not all families are Christians. Casas por Cristo is an outreach tool for the pastors in Mexico. If you are working for a non-Christian family, don't be discouraged. Show these families that it's His love that makes you show such kindness to strangers.

Personal Belongings: The first rule of thumb is to never bring anything to Mexico that you would be heartbroken to

leave without. While theft has been at a minimum, there is a potential for things to be stolen. At the worksite, your vehicles should be locked at ALL times. At night, and during siesta, **the vehicles must be completely emptied and locked**. It is a good idea to keep valuables and money "on your person".

Job Site Safety

The two most frequent job site injuries are debris in the eye and dehydration. Both of these injuries are avoidable with proper planning and care.

Always wear eye protection at the work site. Even if you are not using power-tools, it is essential to keep your eyes protected. Bouncing nails and loose debris (sand, roofing granules, cement, drywall dust, saw dust, etc.) are typical hazards on the worksite that can cause serious eye irritation and scratches which could require trips to the hospital. Bring sunglasses or safety glasses and wear them.

The heat can be deadly. Dehydration can sneak up on you before you know it. Remember to drink water regularly. Due to dry conditions you may not even feel like you are sweating very much. You should drink a gallon of water at the worksite every day. Even if you don't feel like you can pull your self away from your work, you need to drink water.

In addition, it is very important to keep your body protected against sunburn. Even if you think you won't burn, you need to wear sunscreen or protective clothing.

You know your body and physical limitations and what you are capable of doing. If your CpC Rep asks you to do something

that you are physically incapable of, please tell them. They will be able to reassign you to another duty.

Guidelines for Mexico

(Rules for the church and work site)

1. Don't throw toilet paper in the toilet; it clogs them up. (Use the provided wastebasket.)
2. Smoking and alcohol are not allowed.
3. Both men and women must wear shirts at all times. TANK TOPS/SLEEVELESS SHIRTS ARE NEVER ALLOWED.
4. Always ask the pastor or CpC staff person where you should throw your trash. Use your own garbage bags.
5. Stay off the church roofs.
6. Enforce a curfew of no later than 10 PM.
(We don't want to disturb the neighbors or pastor.)
7. It is important to stay off the altar.
8. Do not play the church's instruments.

Staying at the Church in Mexico

You are the guest of the church in Mexico. Make sure that you treat your host church in Mexico as well as you would treat your own. There are certain rules that we will expect you to follow, so please read the *Guidelines for Mexico* page carefully so you can plan accordingly.

Some churches are more active with teams than others. At the minimum, you should expect to see your pastor one time. Some pastors have full-time jobs outside of the ministry

that, combined with additional church activities, limit their involvement with teams. Many pastors live on the church premises, and the amount of your interaction with them is dependent on you.

Showers: Most churches will have a shower. Most of them do not have hot water, and have a limited water supply. We ask you to take military showers: get wet, turn the water off, soap up, and then turn the water back on to rinse off your body. Don't drink the water in the shower or while you are brushing your teeth. The sickness that usually accompanies drinking the water is less than pleasant and will keep you from working. If your church doesn't have a shower, be sure to bring plenty of baby wipes. It's important to be flexible if no shower is available. It's only for a few days, and you'll be that much more appreciative and thankful when you do take one.

Bathrooms: Do not flush the toilet paper in the toilets. It will cause the toilets to back up. If you flush the paper and it backs up, you will be responsible for plunging it. Also remember to bring toilet paper. It's also a good idea to bring air freshener and extra garbage bags.

Sleeping: Sleeping accommodations are usually one or two large rooms with no beds, so it is recommended that you bring cots or air mattresses if you do not want to sleep on the floor. (Battery operated fans can help keep you cool in the summer). Don't forget your pillow and sleeping bag. Keep in mind it gets cold in the non-summer months.

Hair Dryers: Do not bring hair dryers and curling irons. There are a limited amount of outlets in each church, and there are many items that need to be charged for work the

next day. Besides, this is your chance to get away from some of the hassles of your normal life. In the morning there is also limited time and space to "get ready".

No cards, dice, or dominos: Many church people in Mexico associate card playing with gambling.

Gifts for the Families

If you want to bring gifts for the family, we have a few suggestions for you. While toys for the children are very nice (crayons, bubbles, books, etc), most families also have practical needs too.

Ceramic Space Heater (this is our #1 suggested gift!!)

Rugs/Carpet pieces (this is our #2 suggested gift!!)

Curtains (windows are 36"x36")

Curtain Rods

Mini Blinds

Garden Hose

Cooking Utensils

Broom

Dust Pan

Towels

Toiletries

Blankets

Pillows

Sheets

Box/Floor Fans (CpC provides one ceiling fan for each house)

Tape/Mud/Trowels for Drywall (You may not have time to do this, but you can leave it for the family)

Paint (Interior/Exterior)

Painting Supplies

If you have questions about other items that may be appropriate gifts, call us. We would be happy to advise you. It is important that you wait to pass out gifts until the house has been completed. Word travels fast that there are people handing out gifts. It is difficult to keep an eye on the tools and worksite with numerous extra people hanging around. If you are limited on space to bring gifts, it is appropriate to leave your family with a small monetary gift.

Note: While American customs agents are concerned with illegal drugs and citizenship, Mexican customs agents look for illegal importation of goods. Please pack all of your gifts for the family in with your personal belongings. Pack all gifts in a suitcase or traveling bag no trash bags or store bags. Remove price tags and labels when possible. Don't pack multiple items together (i.e. 10 new towels in one suitcase or 10 new pairs of jeans).

Market

Upon completion of the house, many teams like to take a trip to the market. This is not a requirement, merely an option. The market is indoors, and operates on a bartering system. The vendors speak English, and gladly accept American money. Team leaders need to be aware that there will be a slight parking fee per vehicle. Again, small bills will come in handy for parking fees and for purchases in the market.

Illegal Items

Each person is allowed to bring through US Customs \$400.00 worth of "duty free" articles.

You are NOT allowed to bring the following into the US:

- Fruits/vegetables/meats
- Fireworks
- Narcotics or Illicit Drugs
- Merchandise made from endangered species
- Cuban cigars
- Live birds
- Switchblade knives

In addition, you should refrain from buying anything that would tarnish the reputation of Casas por Cristo, your group or Jesus Christ.

History and How the Ministry Works

Casas por Cristo was founded in 1993. In 1994 Casas por Cristo built 48 homes. In April 2001 Casas por Cristo built its one-Thousandth home. April 2003 marked the completion of house 1500, while December 2004 we built house 2000. The end of 2006 saw the completion of over 2600 homes. Over the years the face of the ministry has changed, but the purpose of Casas por Cristo has stayed the same--building Homes to the glory of God.

For more than thirteen years Casas por Cristo has worked to share the love of Christ through building homes in Juarez, Mexico. Casas por Cristo works in partnership with the local pastors in Juarez by coordinating teams from the US and Canada to come down and build homes for needy families selected by the Casas por Cristo Pastor's Committee.

The Pastor's Committee is comprised of over 100 local Mexican pastors. One of the functions of their monthly

meetings is the selection of family applications. The pastors solicit applications from church members, neighbors and families in the communities in which they work. Every application is reviewed by the Applications Committee. After this selection process the applications are turned over to our El Paso office to be partnered up with teams.

Applicant selection is based on their need to obtain sufficient housing and means to do so. Families must be able to prove ownership of land, provide water, and have the land cleared and leveled in preparation for the teams arrival. Families are not required to be Christians or attend their sponsoring pastor's church. Casas por Cristo is a tool for the use of the local Pastors to evangelize the community in Juarez.

Casas por Cristo has fourteen full-time staff (and growing) in El Paso and three in Juarez. All El Paso staff members are support-based missionaries. The livelihood of each of these people is based on your support. The cost of the house pays for the materials in the home, Mexican staff salary and ministry overhead. If you enjoy working with your staff member, please prayerfully consider supporting them. At the end of each week, you will have the opportunity to provide them with an offering in a provided Casas por Cristo donation envelope. If you are working with an intern, you may also provide them with a SMALL offering. However, please simply give them the offering instead of putting it in the CpC envelope. Because of tax regulations we are allowed to provide a tax-deductible receipt from to gifts to staff or CpC only. To stay current with a staff member's news, you can request to be added to their newsletter mailing list.