



# DISASTER RESPONSE SERVICES

## PREPARING TO SERVE

Short term missions are more than just arriving, working, and leaving. As a servant of Christ, you will be entering the home of a disaster survivor, meeting new people, learning new skills, and experiencing Christ in a new way. Not to mention, what happens when you return home after a Spirit-filled week?

Here are a few items to prepare you for your time of service, including suggested readings for when you return home.

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# REPRESENTING CHRIST

As a World Renew volunteer, you agree to the following...

*I understand that World Renew is a Christian organization, committed to demonstrating God's love through word and deed. I understand that as a volunteer with World Renew, I am representing Christ and His Church while on assignment, and I agree to demonstrate Christian values and behavior at all times.*

- Remember, what you do and the way you conduct yourself around others often speaks more loudly than what you say.
- You will be shaping how people view Christ, Christianity, and World Renew.
- Christ did many miraculous acts for people, but he also sat down to talk with them, eat with them, love them.
- Many people can be very task oriented on these types of trips, but we encourage everyone to set down their tools and talk with the people you are working for.

# REMEMBER, YOU ARE A GUEST

Please remember that you are a guest in the community you will be serving and in the homes you will be working on. Treat everyone with the same sensitivity you expect from guests in your home and community. Prayerfully maintain a humble and servant heart during your stay. If you have questions about the culture or how you should conduct yourself in the community, please ask your local coordinator for guidance.

# FRUSTRATIONS TO PLAN ON...

This might seem like an odd thing to mention, but groups have a more satisfying overall experience if they understand ahead of time that they are likely to encounter some things that will be somewhat frustrating. Among those things...

**Details:** You—and/or people in your group—would like to have more details about your accommodations and work assignments than you are likely to have ahead of time. While we do our best to provide you with the best available information, it usually is less than

100% complete and accurate. Your questions are always welcomed, but we also ask that you be *FLEXIBLE and trust God to work out the details—He always does!*

**Work Assignments:...Plan on your work assignments being less organized than you would like.** If you expect to have detailed work instructions, along with all the necessary materials and tools, ready to go at 8:00AM Monday, you are going to be VERY disappointed! We appreciate that you want to accomplish as much as possible in your limited time—we simply ask that you are understanding of the circumstances and trust the local coordinators are doing the best they can. If you find yourself waiting for assignments or for materials, it may be a great opportunity to just spend some time talking with the home owner or others in the community.

Please understand that coordinating all the work is a very challenging and complicated task, often done by local staff who are stretched thin but are doing their very best, organizing work for different volunteers each week. While you have been planning this trip for months, they aren't able to focus on what you will be working on until a week or so before you arrive - it all depends on what gets accomplished before you arrive, funding, materials, other available volunteer help, etc.

Your work assignment may be different from what you anticipated, and you may think you have better ideas about what should be done and how it should be done. The work you are asked to do may appear to have little to do with natural disaster damage, but rather from years of falling into disrepair. Remember that the persons whose homes you are working on in most cases were materially poor long before the disaster struck. Please accept your work assignment graciously and without judging the homeowner or questioning the construction supervisor. If you have concerns, respectfully share your thoughts with your team leader and/or the construction supervisor, but also recognize that the system you are working within has many requirements and limitations. Don't get discouraged by these limitations, or by the hard work, or by what may seem like a lack of progress in those first few days

# GOALS AND EXPECTATIONS

There can be a number of reasons to plan a mission trip/service project. We would like to help you think through your goals, as that may have a significant impact on your (*and our*) planning, and what you actually do before, during, and after your trip. By review the chart below, ranking your priorities, and discussing with your group, you will have a better idea of why you are volunteering, and how to make the most out of your trip.

Note: potentially only one, or possibly ALL these reasons could be on your agenda. None are considered “bad” reasons. Some may require more stretching than what you seek. We encourage you to go thru this exercise with your group’s leadership, and potentially your entire group.

<i>Possible reason to plan a mission trip</i>	<i>Implications for planning</i>	<i>Priority ranking: Points out of 100 Comments?</i>
Use time, talents, and other resources to cleanup, repair and rebuild homes damaged in disasters—i.e. get as much work accomplished as possible	Make sure tools, materials, work assignments are lined up as much as possible. Emphasis on efficiency and productive work days. Possibly provide pre-trip training in certain skill areas.	
Build relationships with homeowners: talking with, encouraging, praying with when appropriate, etc.	Less emphasis on tasks, more on spending time with homeowners. Priority on cases with owners available. Practice listening/encouraging skills.	
Spiritual growth of team members	Emphasis on planning meaningful devotions, worship. Challenges to watch for God at work. Emphasis on taking steps of faith.	
Fun Fun Fun	Emphasis on extra-curricular fun activities throughout the week. Bring appropriate equipment and materials.	
Growth in awareness and sensitivity to issues like cultural differences, poverty, social justice, when helping might be hurting, etc.	Emphasis on pre-trip orientation, reading materials with discussion, experiential exercises; debriefing during trip; further discussion & reflection after some time has passed.	
Lasting impact, change in attitudes and priorities of members as evidenced by more service focus in home community and/or additional mission trips	Emphasis on pre-trip orientation, processing/debriefing during trip, post-trip follow-thru, planning, and accountability	
Other reasons/agenda you have:		

Total of this column = 100

# EMOTIONAL ROLLER COASTER

Volunteers often express that a service trip like you are planning is a bit of a roller coaster, full of emotional and spiritual “highs” and “lows.” In the planning stages you may be very excited, anticipating an exciting trip and great opportunities to serve the Lord. Some of the excitement may fade when you realize all the effort it will take to plan and pack. And the long trip to the site may have its boring moments, so plan for some games and an adequate number of stops along the way. When you get there, living arrangements may not be all you anticipated, and things may not be as organized as you like. Flexibility is essential, and it helps to keep in mind the big picture of what you are doing and whom you are serving on this trip.

Your work assignment may be different from what you anticipated, and you may think you have better ideas about what should be done and how it should be done. The work you are asked to do may appear to have little to do with hurricane damage, but rather from years of falling into disrepair. Remember that the persons whose homes you are working on in most cases were materially poor long before the hurricane.

Please accept your work assignment graciously, and without judging the homeowner or questioning the construction supervisor. Respectfully share your thoughts with your team leader and/or the construction supervisor, but also recognize that the system you are working within has many requirements and limitations. Don't get discouraged by these limitations, or by the hard work, or by what may seem like a lack of progress in those first few days.

Chances are that later in the week you will feel that you have really “bonded” with the group you are working with, and perhaps with the client whose house you are working on, and that you will feel very good about the relationships you have built, the work you have accomplished, and the ways you can see God at work in your life. You may be on an emotional and spiritual “high” at that point.

Then there's the reality of the long trip home. And when you get home—feeling like a changed person—you find that little has changed at home. Family members and friends who didn't go with you have a hard time relating to your excitement. And soon you are

back in your old routine of school, work, or whatever, and you may be disappointed to find your memories and excitement about the trip fading.

To counter this, we recommend several things:

1. Be aware from the beginning that you likely will experience a range of emotions before, during and after the experience. We recommend that each day, leaders set aside some time to talk as a group about what you are experiencing, what you are feeling, what questions or concerns you might have, etc. Talk with a leader or good friend if you have concerns about your own reactions.
2. Get a good balance of healthy food, exercise, and rest throughout your time away from your normal routine. Keep your sense of humor, and find things to laugh about with your co-workers.
3. Pray for your group's safety and a positive experience, but also pray for the ability to focus on serving God and being open to what He wants you to do and to learn.
4. Take pictures, write in a journal, make a scrapbook, or whatever else may help you preserve the memories and maintain your excitement and motivation to serve.
5. We encourage you to plan to make a presentation at your church or other groups, presenting what you did, what you learned, and how you grew spiritually. You might also notify your local paper about your trip, as they may want to do a story about you. This could be a real encouragement for others who are thinking about serving in some way.
6. Share your stories with CRWRC-DRS! Groups that are considering a service trip are often most impressed with the stories of those who have gone before them. We have opportunities to publish some of these stories to show how God is at work and how volunteers can make a difference. Please send us pictures of your group as a whole or while at work, particularly if they are wearing the green shirts we provided. It works best for us to receive them by email. You might find your pictures posted on our website ([www.crwrc.org](http://www.crwrc.org)) or used in our promotional materials!

# INTERACTING WITH DISASTER SURVIVORS

**Most of the homeowners and communities we work with were materially poor long before the disaster struck.** You likely will encounter significant cultural differences, and issues of poverty and injustice may hit you for the first time. It is essential that you have an *attitude of humility and of wanting to learn* from the local people, not an attitude of superiority or judging. Many volunteers have had encounters with people who live in poverty but who express a strong faith in God and a positive attitude from which we can learn a great deal.

**Get to know the homeowners and people you meet.** If given the opportunity, *introduce yourselves* to the people to whom you are assigned, tell them about what you are going to be doing on their house, and tell them a little about yourselves. If they seem comfortable, ask some non-threatening questions such as what it was like for them when the storm came through. Some people have had very little opportunity just to talk about the traumatic experience they went through, and doing so can bring them emotional healing. If you feel moved to set your hammer down and just listen for a while, *please do so*.

**Most people that we are working for express a great deal of appreciation for our efforts, but some may not.** A few seem not to be appreciative, and may even be critical of our work. In those cases, try to listen and to honor their preferences within the guidelines of the assignment. But also remember that you can't possibly know everything they have been through and what may be behind the behavior that you see.

**Never *accept* money or items of value from clients which they may offer you out of appreciation.** If they want to make a monetary donation, encourage them to contact the local organization you are working with, a local church, or give them the phone number or address of World Renew.

**Do not *give* money or items of value to clients who ask or who you think need additional help.** If they seem to have significant unmet needs, refer them to the local organization coordinating your work or encourage them to contact a local church.

**Feel free to mention your church and your motivation as a Christian to be serving in this way.** Many clients will share their own faith and church involvement, and you have an open door to encourage each other spiritually. Some may not express such openness, and you must be careful not to exert pressure—it could be counterproductive. If you feel moved to pray with a client that you have gotten to know, make sure you ask them first whether they would like to do so.

## SAFETY

1. **\*\*Never go anywhere by yourself!**
2. *First Aid Kits:* Groups should supply each vehicle with an appropriately supplied First Aid Kit.
3. *General hygiene:* Remember to practice good hygiene such as washing your hands often.
4. *Safety equipment:* The local work coordinator may provide safety goggles, face masks, gloves, or other protective equipment when needed. If these are provided, it is for an important purpose—use them! It is ultimately each volunteer's responsibility to assess the task and to work smart and safely.
5. *Safety with tools and equipment:* Volunteers unfamiliar with any equipment, particularly things like ladders and power tools, must seek training and follow all safety guidelines. It is recommended that power tools be used only by volunteers who are over age 18 and who have been trained on safe use of these tools. It is further recommended that chain saws only be used by adults, using protective gear (chaps, helmets, etc.).
6. *Driving:* Driving in unfamiliar surroundings, in unfamiliar vehicles, with unusual loads increases the chance of accidents. Drivers should plan ahead.
7. *Valuables:* Do not carry large amounts of money or valuables.
8. *Appropriate clothing:* Solid shoes or boots are essential (no flip-flops or sandals!). For many of the work assignments, jeans are more appropriate than shorts, despite the warm weather. Caps, sunglasses, and sun block are essential to protect eyes and skin when working outdoors. Volunteers should take their cues from the local work coordinator, in light of each day's assignments.
9. *Emotional /spiritual safety:* Please have respect for persons served and fellow volunteers, maintain appropriate boundaries (not getting over-involved in others' problems), avoid potentially offensive language and joking, no touching that is unwanted or unwelcome, or any form of sexual harassment, etc.

While it is most common for volunteers to have a tremendous emotional and spiritual "growth spurt" on trips like this, there is also the potential that some could find parts of it emotionally traumatizing. Volunteers see incredible scenes of destruction, and often hear stories from survivors that could sound extremely frightening. It is important for the team to "debrief" --certainly at the end, but preferably daily--about what they are seeing and hearing and how they feel about it, and to pay close attention to anyone who seems to be struggling.

10. *Attitude*: Take your time...do the job well and safely!

## PACKING LIST

Keeping in mind that accommodations, work assignments, and even weather vary, here is a general list:

- Sunblock
- Bug spray
- Personal medications
- Boots or solid shoes
- Work jeans (in addition to shorts)
- Long and short sleeve work shirts
- Sunglasses
- Baseball cap
- Swimsuit (modest, please)
- Clothes for non-work times (modest, please)
- Bible, journal
- Bedding/sleeping bag, pillow (depending on site accommodations)
- Ear plugs (unless you sleep well through others' snoring!)
- First aid kits (at least one/vehicle)
- Soap, shampoo, toothbrush, etc.
- Towels
- Cooler(s) for lunches
- Ideas for devotions and activities
- Camera
- Basic or preferred tools (not required)
- A commitment to work hard, respect others, and be open to learning

# RETURNING HOME

It can be difficult to adjust to life at home after having a Spirit-filled week serving others. Here are a few books to consider reading when you return home to help incorporate what you have experienced into everyday life.

- What Can I Do? Making a global difference right where you are, by David Livermore. Learn about global issues, God's invitation to bring his redemptive love to the world, and how to do this in your everyday life.
- Deep Justice Journeys: 50 activities to move from mission Trips to missional living, by Kara Powell and Brad Griffin.
- When Helping Hurts: How to alleviate poverty without hurting the poor...or yourself, by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, 2009. Christian perspectives on providing the "right" help to the poor, not in a way that promotes their dependence or feelings of inferiority.
- The Hole in Our Gospel, by Richard Stearns, President of World Vision. Convicting and inspiring book about the realities of poverty and hurt in the world, and the opportunity (duty?) Christians have to "change the world."

*The following can also be found at the end of the World Renew - Prayer Journal.*

It is important to reflect on how God has allowed you to see and experience many new things and a variety of ministries. You have been blessed in this way so you may in turn be a blessing to others. It is important to record some of what you have learned and how you will be different in the future because of the experiences you have had.

For each of the following...

The place I visited -

The experience-

ask yourself...

How was/were \_\_\_\_\_ different than I expected?

How was/were \_\_\_\_\_ the same as I expected?

What did I learn from \_\_\_\_\_?

How is God working in \_\_\_\_\_?

## At Home

One of the greatest benefits of this type of experience is what can happen inside yourselves and how you can infect your friends and family with a renewed commitment to missions. Missions multiply as you tell your story, so it's important that you tell it well. You will be going home to people who likely haven't had the same experience, won't understand what you've been through and often won't seem to want to listen to you or your story. The following suggestions should help you readjust to being home again.

- Keep your expectation level low about friends' response, but don't let that dampen the excitement of sharing your experience. Try to stay in touch with some of the people you met and got to know on the trip.
- Review your journal. This will help you remember the growth you experienced on the trip and will bring specific instances to mind that you can tell your friends when they ask about the trip.
- Contact prayer partners and supporters; thank them for their prayers during the trip and ask them to keep praying for you as you let the Holy Spirit keep working through you.

## Make the Most Out of "Small Talk"

Plenty of times you'll be asked, "How was your trip?" It can be hard to answer that in two minutes or less! Here's a tip: Pick three key points of interest and say one sentence about each. For example, "It was amazing. The homeowners showed incredible faith in God even through difficult times after the disaster, the church we stayed at was so hospitable and provided meals for us, and we really bonded as a team as we talked about what being a servant of Christ really means."

## Speaking From the Heart

You've had an amazing experience, volunteering your time to help others in need. Now you're home again, brimming with the wonder of the experience and eager to share it with others. But where do you begin? How do you condense your experience into a short summary, or 3-5 minute presentation? Below is a rough speaking outline that you can use to develop a short presentation. Use this as a starting point, adapting it as needed to fit your situation.

### Provide some background

Your name, where you went, and when.

Why you went.

Briefly describe World Renew—a disaster response and development organization (an agency of the Christian Reformed Church) at work in 30 countries, focusing on:

- Disaster response —providing for the immediate needs of disaster survivors and helping to repair and rebuild survivors’ homes
- Development — helping men and women work together to overcome illiteracy, hunger, malnutrition, unemployment, HIV and AIDS, child mortality, injustice, and other issues affecting them. Or, World Renew “teaches men and women to fish.” As the adage says, “give a man a fish, he eats for a day; teach a man to fish, he eats for a lifetime.”

Tell a story

- Briefly introduce a person that you encountered.
- Talk about what his/her life or the community was like before and after the disaster.
- Explain how you were a part of the rebuilding efforts.

Impact and thanks

- Express how the experience impacted you.
- Let them know how to find out more about what you did, the ministry of World Renew.
- Thank them for their time, and if applicable, prayers and financial support.

## KEEPING THE MOMENTUM

### Continue Journaling and Discussing

You will get more meaning out of the experience if you reflect on and discuss things like the following:

- What was the most meaningful thing about the trip? The hardest thing? The most fun thing?
- What are the most significant lessons God taught you?
- What did God enable you to do that you didn’t think you could do?
- What did God teach you about Himself?
- What did you learn about your own strengths and weaknesses during the project?
- What was your greatest contribution to the project? To the team?

- What did you learn from the people you met? What do you admire about them?
- How would you describe your relationship with the Lord before and after your trip?
- What are you going to do to continue growing your relationship with the Lord?
- If given another chance, would you change the way you conducted yourself? How?

### Stay Practical and Realistic

If your excitement leads you to say, “I am going to pray for every disaster victims and other volunteers every day, and I’m going to memorize every verse in the Bible on missions,” you are probably headed for failure. Instead, make one or two realistic goals to incorporate what you experienced into your daily life and what steps you can take to reach your goals. Write them down and refer to them often.

### Centering on God’s Mission in the World

For centering your heart on God’s mission in the world, start with one or two ideas below.

Scripture: Spend quality time in God’s Word; let God show you his heart for the world.

Pray: Pray for the staff at the local organization you worked with, DRS staff, disaster victims, and other volunteers. Prayer was the first priority when Jesus saw the multitudes who were in need (Matt. 9:35-38).

Reach out at home: Pray regularly for one or two people who are not Christians and become intentional in your witness to them. Educate yourself on the needs in your community and find a way to volunteer.

Learn: Seek knowledge of current world events with a response of prayer and involvement. Devote yourself to learning more about one or two missionaries, ministries, or countries.

Fellowship: Have your small group work together on a service project or study a global need.

Join: Visit [facebook.com/WorldRenewDRS](https://facebook.com/WorldRenewDRS) to stay connected with others like you and find out about upcoming opportunities and needs.

Give: Be a good steward of your talents, time and money. Make intentional lifestyle choices so that you have more to give and can share freely what God has entrusted to you. Create a personal financial strategy with targets for giving and stick to it.

Encourage: Continue to encourage the homeowner you met by writing letters and letting them know you are praying for them.

Read: Read missions biographies, newsletters, and websites, Look for resources to inspire and grow your vision, and allow you to see the people God uses. As you learn more, God will increase your ability to influence others for missions.

Church: Support missions in your church. Join the missions committee; attend mission's events, etc.

Experience: Prayerfully consider other opportunities to serve at home and on another DRS trip.