



**PRESBYTERIAN
DISASTER
ASSISTANCE**

OUT OF CHAOS, HOPE

TO: Volunteer Work Teams

FROM: Presbyterian Disaster Assistance
Ferncliff Center

Thank you for your commitment to assist in the clean up and recovery work generated by the natural disaster, hurricanes Katrina, Rita, Gustav and Ike. The work of teams will be difficult and labor intensive. It focuses on the reconstruction of homes as there is minimal clean up work to be done. Volunteer teams can bring a sense of hope to the affected populations.

Enclosed is information for you to share with your team. Please provide each team member with a copy. Its aim is to prepare all of you to participate in a volunteer village and to have a meaningful experience, therefore it is important that all members of the team become familiar with this information. Completing the required forms prior to arrival at the village is imperative.

Please be mindful that you will be working under adverse conditions with respect to climate and terrain. This was a historic disaster and is giving rise to a new Presbyterian response. It is a work in progress, so “flexible” is the word to start each day. We believe that we are building a new PDA model for the future, so together we serve as a team to work out the “bugs”.

You are embarking on what will be a memorable experience. Give what you are able, take time to rest and reflect, and pray for each other and your mission. Please take time to listen to the stories of the area residents, remembering that your presence means as much as your work.

May God richly bless you with understanding, courage, and compassion.



Pre-Departure Checklist

Before arriving in the Gulf, **each team member should:**

- Give the team leader an assessment of his /her skills as outlined in the “Skills Assessment Form”. It is critical that the team leader send a compiled form to pdacallcenter@sbcglobal.net. The form then will be forwarded it to your assigned village’s worksite manager. The jobs that the team members can successfully complete may then be determined prior to your arrival .
- Have an up-to-date tetanus shot in the event of an injury from a nail or other rusty metal.
- Attend a free workshop or “clinic” at Home Depot or Lowe’s about installing and finishing sheet rock, roofing, framing, etc. (These workshops are usually on weekends. However, the store will normally be accommodating if you would like to schedule a special session for your whole team!)
- Review the orientation manual and ask that the team leader seek answers to any questions from the Call Center or the Village Manager.
- If flying, consider purchasing travel insurance in the event of a hurricane or natural disaster which may cause you to change your plans.
- If flying, arrange to rent vehicles large enough to accommodate your team and the provided tools you will be transporting to the work site. If driving, please remember to take this into consideration.
- Team members who have experienced serious illness or have heart problems or diabetes should check with a doctor to insure that they are healthy enough to volunteer. **Summer months are extremely hot in the Gulf, and physical labor (plus the stress of living in primitive conditions) can accelerate the onset of heatstroke or aggravate other pre-existing conditions.**

Important: The work teams will be coming to a relatively warm climate in an area that has severe hurricane or tornado damage. Please note, however, as you gather supplies based on the following list, you may need to modify some items as the weather cools. True winter on the Gulf Coast is chilly and feels cold because of the proximity of the ocean. Thunderstorms and heavy showers occur all year round, so you may be very happy that you packed your rain gear.

Each Volunteer Team should bring:

- One (1) battery operated camp lantern per 2-3 people (check with the village manager, some villages have electricity in the pods.)
- First Aid Kit for your team (These are available at your local American Red Cross Chapter office.)
- Coolers for lunches/snacks at work sites. (Those who fly should be able to purchase locally.) Check with your village manager.
- Funds for incidentals.
- A “Tax Exempt” letter from the local congregation to be used for any supply purchases.
- **AND MOST IMPORTANT YOUR RELEASE FORMS.**

Individual Volunteers should bring:

Bedding

- Sleeping bag
- Flat sheets
- Pillow
- Flashlight and extra batteries

Clothing

- Socks and undergarments
- Heavy work boots (**steel-toed shoes are highly recommended**)
- Leather or heavy duty work gloves/light cotton gloves
- Rain gear
- Hat, visor, bandana and /or sweatband
- T-shirts or work shirts
- Long-sleeve shirts
- Jeans or pants and shorts
- Pajamas
- Shower shoes and robe

Toiletries

- Toothbrush/toothpaste
- Soap/shampoo
- Wet wipes
- Deodorant
- Personal medication for length of stay
- Sunscreen
- Insect repellent
- Razor/shaving cream (electricity may not be available)

Miscellaneous

- Bible
- Travel clock
- Fanny pack/backpack
- Spending money
- Water bottle
- Sunglasses

Personal Items

- Towels/washcloths
- Car chargers for electronic equipment

What Not to Bring

- RVs and campers (PDA cannot guarantee that there will be hookups, or even parking space for these large vehicles)
- Tents
- Alcohol
- No weapons

