



DISASTER RESPONSE SERVICES

PLANNING A SHORT TERM MISSION TRIP

First of all, thank you for contacting World Renew Disaster Response Services regarding your interest in volunteering and in possibly taking a leadership role in pulling a group together to serve. The major natural disasters of recent years have resulted in overwhelming needs—as well as incredible opportunities to serve and witness to survivors and communities impacted by these storms. If you are like the vast majority of our volunteers, you will find yourself richly blessed as you bless others!





On June 12, 2012 the delegates of the Christian Reformed Church Synod voted to accept the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee’s proposal to change our name to “World Renew”. Having received previous endorsements by CRWRC’s Canadian and US Board of Delegates and the CRCNA Board of Trustees, CRWRC is now known as World Renew.

Please know that we will continue to be the same organization that you know and trust. We will continue to respond to the needs of disaster survivors and people in poverty on your behalf with the love of Christ and with quality programs that will change their lives for the better in the long-term. We will also continue to affirm and hold dear our Christian Reformed identity and Reformed worldview, as they are the backbone of who we are.

The following pages will explain many of the logistics you need to know when planning a short term mission trip with World Renew Disaster Response Services. More details will become available later in the process. Please do not hesitate to contact us with questions at any point.

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THE PROGRAM

A bit of history: CRWRC was formed in the early 1960's to address issues of poverty and injustice worldwide, which the organization continues to do. In the 1970s, disaster relief services were further developed. Today, World Renew Disaster Response Services (DRS) includes rapid response immediately after disasters hit, helping communities organize around long-term recovery, assessing needs in the community, and reconstruction. DRS has a roster of nearly 2000 long-term volunteers, mostly retirees who serve for two to three weeks or more on a site, and who frequently accept numerous assignments over a period of years. Over 1,700 volunteers serve through the short-term program annually.

On occasion, long-term volunteers who have served on DRS sites are part of a group that goes to a partner organization (non-DRS) site. Those volunteers need to understand that the structure of the two types of sites is quite different. Also, it is our hope that volunteers who serve in a one week group will be inspired to serve more, perhaps someday becoming long-term volunteers!

DRS MANAGED SITE VS DRS GROUP PARTNER ORGANIZATION SITE

Most of the time, DRS is operating four to five sites with our own unique structure and with specific contracts with those communities. Our long-term volunteers come from around the US and Canada to serve for three weeks on these sites in a highly-scheduled format.

After Hurricane Katrina hit in August of 2005, DRS had an incredible number of calls from churches that wanted to send groups of volunteers, generally to serve for one week. There are only very limited opportunities to fit one week groups into our long-term sites so a new program was developed to put these groups to work.

In order to better fit the needs of short-term volunteer groups, DRS began forming partnerships with numerous recovery organizations and churches to provide housing and work for the many groups interested in serving disaster affected communities. These churches and organizations do a fine job of providing accommodations to volunteer groups as well as having materials, basic tools, and appropriate work planned. Because of the large number of partner organizations, we can schedule virtually any size group of diverse ages and skill levels, with a range of locations and accommodations to suit the group's interests and needs.

THE PROCESS

Below is what you can generally expect, start to finish, when planning a one-week trip with World Renew DRS.

STEP 1: GATHER GROUP INFORMATION

- *Preferred dates*
- *Approximate number of participants*
- *Age range of participants*
- *Skill levels of participants*
- *Preferred travel distance*

Because of our many partners and contacts, we can nearly guarantee that, when given the basics, we will be able to find a good place for the group to serve. Generally, we suggest two to three months of lead time in planning but we are certainly able to work with a shorter lead time. Planning a few months ahead of time will allow for more options and likelihood of securing your preferred location, especially January through April.

If a date has not been determined, we suggest the leader survey likely participants and get back to DRS staff with the preferred date. Our suggestion is that one week groups plan to arrive late on a Saturday, use Sunday to worship with a local congregation and tour the area, work from Monday through Friday, and leave for home either late Friday or early Saturday. This schedule is not inflexible, but we find it works very well for groups. Some partners do specify days of the week/times of arrival and departure and we will let you know if that is the case.

STEP 2: SCHEDULE A LOCATION

After a preferred date has been established, DRS staff will begin looking for an appropriate location. When you feel you need a specific location assignment well in advance in order to promote the trip, be sure to let DRS staff know (staff will propose what they feel is the group's best option).

Because new disasters can strike at any time, and because situations in disaster areas can change quickly, our preference is to delay the specific assignment until perhaps three to four months prior to the chosen dates. Even after assignments are made, it must be understood that new disasters or an approaching hurricane could cause plans to be altered on short notice.

STEP 3: COMPLETE AND RETURN APPLICATION

After the reservation at a specific location has been made, we will send you an application that includes the specifics of the trip and a skills inventory, which each volunteer completes. Minors will need parental approval.

The group leader collects the completed forms and returns them all in one group to us. After reviewing them, we forward the information to the site. The work coordinator at the site uses the information to begin planning appropriate and adequate work for your group.

If you are a Canadian group serving in the United States, we will discuss with you options for crossing the border.

STEP 4: TEAM ORIENTATION

We encourage you to meet together for orientation before your trip. Consider using the Preparing to Serve document (available from the DRS office) as a part of your orientation.

Topics include:

- Work, Tools, Materials
- Housing and food
- A Typical Week
- Safety
- Frustrations to Plan On
- Interacting with Disaster Survivors
- The Emotional Experience
- Returning Home

Consider several meetings with your group in the months or weeks prior to the trip. Goals could include team building, sharing of basic trip information, spiritual preparation, and potentially orientation on broader issues that may come to the surface in the course of a service trip—issues such as poverty, racism, cultural differences, etc. See the resources at the end of this document for suggestions.

We are more than happy to talk with you about options and materials. Upon request, a DRS staff and/or experienced volunteer in your vicinity may be able to meet with your team and personally assist with this.

STEP 5: CONNECT WITH LOCAL COORDINATORS

Once all the applications are returned, we will connect you directly with the coordinators at the site to make final arrangements and have your more detailed questions answered. Directions and initial instructions are received either from us or directly from the site.

We ask that you and group members *not* directly contact local staff until we arrange that connection, and that *only the leader* be in touch with the local staff at that point. Otherwise, confusion reigns!

STEP 6: HAND OUT GREEN SHIRTS

You will receive a package from DRS containing shirts of the sizes each person indicated on his or her application. This package will also contain additional materials including feedback reports, photo consent forms, and safety guidelines. Each volunteer will receive a green t-shirt with the World Renew DRS logo on the front. The shirt is yours to keep, and to wear proudly on work sites, and as you wish when you return home.

Please be aware that over the last 40 years, this “green shirt” has come to symbolize both quality work and Christian caring. When you wear it, you are representing not only World Renew and your group, but you are also representing Christ and something of what it means to be a Christian.

STEP 7: SAFE TRAVELS AND WORKING!

Take pictures, especially wearing your green shirts! Let us know if you are planning to post pictures and stories online—we love to follow along.

On your last day, we ask that you give each member the short feedback report to fill out. Please collect them and mail them to us when you return home. This gives us important data and also your valuable feedback on your experience.

STEP 8: RETURNING HOME

Safe travels home! Share your stories and pictures with us and let us know when you want to start planning another trip. Please also return your feedback reports to the office; we look forward to reading them.

Depending on your group, consider sharing the Returning Home resources as well as the last few pages in the Prayer Journal. It’s important to keep the momentum of the Spirit alive when everyone heads home. How can we incorporate what was experienced into our everyday lives?

WHEN FORMING YOUR GROUP, CONSIDER...

It is expected that each volunteer make a significant, positive contribution to the group and to the work—not require so much attention that they detract from the effort.

AGE

Due to risks involved with working in disaster areas, many organizations we partner with have lower age limits, anywhere from 14-18 years old. DRS does not have an absolute age restriction, but we must abide by the rules of the locations to which we send groups. If your group includes youth, we have found good locations in which they can be included. However, even if there are not specific restrictions, we generally recommend that only high school age and above serve on these sites, unless there is only a small number of slightly younger youth who are especially mature and adequately supervised, preferably by their parent/guardian.

SAFETY

It should also be recognized that disaster work by its nature is hazardous. There is potential of injuries from use/misuse of tools, hazardous debris, and other accidents. Each volunteer should have a record of a tetanus shot within the last 10 years. Volunteers must have maturity and self-awareness such that they only do work for which they are qualified and comfortable, particularly when it comes to use of power tools, climbing on roofs, etc.

HEALTH CONSIDERATIONS

We hear sometimes-conflicting reports about health risks due to molds and toxins. People who have significant issues with asthma, allergies, or other respiratory or heart problems are advised by some to stay away from disaster areas.

If you are going to a climate that is much warmer than what you are accustomed to, be aware of heat related issues: dehydration, heat exhaustion, heat stroke, and severe sunburn. It is crucial that leaders be aware of this, stress the importance of drinking large quantities of fluids, taking adequate breaks, and recognizing and responding to early signs of trouble.

EMOTIONAL/SPIRITUAL

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 leaders to debrief the group--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.

PAPERWORK

We have worked very hard to minimize the number of forms you are required to fill out. Below is what you can expect.

APPLICATION/SKILLS INVENTORY

Each volunteer must fully complete this form using dark ink and those under 18 must have a signature from parent/guardian. The form is completed after the specific dates and location are determined and includes name, contact information, self-assessment of skills, liability release, etc. The group leader is responsible for distributing the forms, collecting the completed forms, and forwarding them all in a group to us at the address or fax number at the bottom of the form.

LOCAL FORMS

Occasionally the partner organization you are assigned to has additional forms they require—these will be shared with you around the same time you receive your DRS application or when you arrive on site.

MEDICAL INFORMATION FORM

We do not require this form be completed and we do not want it returned to us, but we highly recommend that this or a similar form be completed by each volunteer, just in case of a serious medical issue. You should collect the forms and insurance information and carry it with you throughout the trip. They contain what is considered confidential information, so they should be handled carefully and disposed of properly upon return home.

FEEDBACK REPORTS

We value your feedback about your experience. We also need to keep records about how much time volunteers contribute, how many facilities they work on, the types of work they do, etc. Near the end of your week, we ask you to distribute a short feedback form (which you will receive in your shirt package) for each volunteer to complete. This allows us to get helpful feedback and continually improve what we are doing, so “thank you” for taking a few minutes to complete it and then mailing it back to us when you return home!

HOUSING AND FOOD

As your dates get closer, you will have more details on the place you will be staying. Accommodations vary from site to site and you may need to bring air mattresses or there could be comfortable beds provided for you. Showers and bathrooms are always available. A kitchen will be available to prepare your own meals; in some cases, all meals are provided.

A TYPICAL DAY

6:45 rise and shine ☺

7:00 make your own lunch

7:15 breakfast, devotions, discuss plans for the day

7:45 leave for the job sites as assigned

8:00 - 4:00 work (with water/coffee and lunch breaks)

4:00 - 4:30 return to home base

4:30 showers

5:00 - 6:00 relax

6:00 supper, devotions, debriefing how the day went

7:00 relax, play games, walk, etc.; individually or as group

Of course, this is just an example. You are free to make adjustments as will fit your group and the schedule of your local coordinators.

COSTS

MEALS

You are responsible for your food costs—while traveling to and from the disaster area, but usually also throughout the week while working. Teams who stay in a location where a kitchen is made available to them seem to feed their groups for approximately \$50 per person for the week. In some locations, some meals are provided either free or at a very reasonable cost.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Some sites charge a nominal fee (or request a donation) for the accommodations to help defray their costs, often in the range of \$10-\$20 per person per day.

MATERIALS

There generally is no charge for materials. However, we do encourage teams to consider making a donation of money to the local organization coordinating your work to help them spread their resources further.

TRANSPORTATION

Your largest expense will probably be your transportation and this will vary greatly depending on how far you need to travel and your mode of transportation. Groups are responsible for their transportation costs to and from the disaster area. If you fly, you will need to rent vehicles to get around locally. Often smaller work groups are assigned to different locations each day, so it is more practical to have several smaller vehicles rather than one large one. For example, we would recommend that a group of 30 travel in several vans rather than one large bus.

WORLD RENEW-DISASTER RESPONSE SERVICES

World Renew does not charge anything for the services we provide to survivors and communities, nor do we charge anything for the coordination of functions we provide to volunteers. We depend entirely on donations to support this vital and growing ministry. There is no expected contribution, but anything your group or church can do to support the ministry of World Renew DRS is much appreciated!

ON THE JOB

TOOLS

Basic tools are generally provided. It is generally recommended that highly skilled workers with specialized tools bring their own if possible. If you have tools to bring along, please connect with the local coordinator to determine what would be needed. If crossing the US/Canadian border, volunteers should not take any tools or materials with them as this could cause complications at the crossing.

MATERIALS

Materials are provided by either the homeowner or the local recovery organization. If you have materials you would like to donate, please talk this over with the local coordinator.

WORK PROJECTS

Your work projects will be coordinated by the partner site construction coordinator. Once your applications are all in, we will connect you with him/her a couple of weeks before you arrive to discuss what projects you will work on. Please be aware that you may not know exactly what you will be doing until sometimes a week or less before your trip. Projects will vary but could include:

- Windows/doors
- Roofing
- Cleanup/demolition
- Drywall work
- Painting
- Framing
- And more



RESOURCES

There are many resources related to short term missions and we want to make you aware of a few out there. We hope these resources will make your job a little easier. Please contact us with questions or to receive copies that are available from DRS.

Resources by topic:

PLANNING / PREPARING
FUNDRAISING IDEAS
DEVOTIONS/DEBRIEFING
GREATER AWARENESS
FOR FUN
CONSTRUCTION SKILLS
COMMISSIONING

PLANNING / PREPARING

- [Preparing to Serve](#), a helpful resource for preparing your group to serve in a disaster area. Topics include:
 - Representing Christ
 - Remember, You Are a Guest
 - Frustrations to Plan On
 - Goals and Expectations
 - Emotional Roller Coaster
 - Interacting With Disaster Survivors
 - Safety
 - Packing List
 - Returning Home
 - Keeping the Momentum
- [Serving with Eyes Wide Open: doing short-term missions with cultural intelligence](#), by David A. Livermore. Addresses the pitfalls of short term missions if not done with sensitivity to global and cultural realities. 192 page paperback, \$12.99, www.bakerbooks.com.
- [Short-Term Missions Workbook: from mission tourists to global citizens](#), by Tim Dearborn. It includes concise summary of cross-cultural principles, help in facing spiritual warfare, tips on avoiding a tourist mentality and spiritual preparation through individual or group Bible study. You'll get a biblical perspective on the world, gain cross-cultural understanding, and even prepare for when you return.

- Get Dirty for Jesus: how to organize a work trip, by Jayna Powell and the Mission Volunteer Program of the RCA. Tips on preparation, the trip itself, studies before and during, when you get home, and various “tools.” www.FaithAliveResources.org, \$14.95US.
- A Guide to Best Practice in Short-term Mission, published by Global Mission Roundtable. How to get the most impact from a short-term mission trip. Free download at <https://www.evangelicalfellowship.ca/NetCommunity/SSLPage.aspx?pid=734&nccsm=21&nccspID=906>.
- The Complete Student Missions Handbook: a step-by-step guide to lead your group out of the classroom and into the field, by Burns and Becchetti, Youth Specialties/Zondervan. From “Why go?” to “Back at the Neighborhood Pool” and everything in between.

FUNDRAISING IDEAS

- Books sale through Faith Alive Christian Resources. Find out more at www.youthgroupbooksale.org.
- Fair trade sale through Global Gifts in Grand Rapids, MI. 20% of sales goes towards your trip. Contact Jeanne Logan at jlogan@globalgiftsgr.com for more information.
- Host an auction. Request donated items from family, friends, school, or church. Consider donating services such as babysitting, lawn care, home repair services, etc.

DEVOTIONS/DEBRIEFING

- Consider developing your own devotions. Some of the best devotions often are created by leaders and group members who know their group the best. Share it with us if you are willing!
- Prayer Journal, published by World Renew DRS; seven days of devotionals focusing on your relationship with other individuals, with communities, with the world, with God, and with the global church. Available through DRS.
- Debriefing Suggestions, provided to you in your shirt package, suggested questions for discussion/personal reflection each day of your trip.
- Meeting God in the Ruins, 21 short devotionals related to disaster work, from “before I go” to “the ruins” to “after I’m home.” Published by the ELCA, some copies available from DRS.

- When Our Whole World Changes, 25 short devotionals, particularly for those who have experienced disaster. Published by International Bible Society, some copies available from DRS.
- Sharing God's Heart for the Poor, by Amy L. Sherman. 17 short devotionals about how to view the poor and how to help them. See this and other resources about poverty at www.centeronfic.org.
- Light Our Way: a guide for spiritual care in times of disaster, published by National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (NVOAD). Not a devotional book, but a guide to providing effective spiritual and emotional care through many aspects of disaster response.

GREATER AWARENESS

- 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. Very thought-provoking, highly recommended. www.whenhelpinghurts.org.
- 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.” Many additional resources included in the back of the book including study guide. See also www.theholeinourgospel.com, and www.worldvisionacts.org.
- Toxic Charity: how churches and charities hurt those they help (and how to reverse it), by Robert D. Lupton. In Toxic Charity, Lupton urges individuals, churches, and organizations to step away from these spontaneous, often destructive acts of compassion toward thoughtful paths to community development...offering tools and inspiration we need to develop healthy, community-driven programs that produce deep, measurable, and lasting change.
- Watch and discuss movies that tell the stories of incredible injustices and atrocities that go on in our world, such as Blood Diamond, Hotel Rwanda, Slumdog Millionaire, Invisible Children, Amazing Grace, The Constant Gardener, City of God, Beyond Belief, Lost Boys of Sudan, The Kite Runner. Be aware that they contain graphic and difficult material.
- “Tripping Over Lazarus: ignoring poverty in North America” in The Banner, July 2006, pages 45-48. The reality of poverty in North America, what we need to know and what we can do. Copies available from DRS.
- Why do Americans Act Like That? a guide to understand the US culture and its values, by L. Robert Kohls. Brief generalizations about mainstream American culture, which may differ

from the culture and values of many of the people DRS serves in the US. three pages, worthy of discussion, copies available at DRS.

- [A Framework for Understanding Poverty](#), by Ruby Payne. 200 pgs, challenges faced by the poor, hidden rules, different values, communication, generational poverty, etc.

FOR FUN

- [Crowd Breakers and Mixers](#), published by Youth Specialties/Zondervan. Over 100 ideas for mixers and fun/funny activities, especially for youth.
- [Spontaneous Melodramas](#) published by Youth Specialties/Zondervan, several editions. Funny no-prep skits with a biblical lesson.

CONSTRUCTION SKILLS

If interested in learning new skills before you go, or interested in a team building event before your trip, here are a few suggestions. ***Please note*, there is no guarantee you will use these same skills on your trip—rather, this would be a learning experience and team building opportunity.

- If you know a home builder or painter, or other professional, ask if he or she would be willing to do a demonstration on best practices, safety, and a hands on activity.
- Home Depot, Lowes, or similar stores in your area may provide seminars on things like hanging/finishing drywall, installing doors, installing flooring, painting, etc. Visit your local store or go to their website.
- www.thisoldhouse.com/toh/how-to has videos and instructions about dozens of repair jobs, from foundations to roofing.
- World Renew DRS has “best practices” for SAFETY regarding roofing, using pneumatic nail guns, and flood cleanup. Contact us for details.

COMMISSIONING

- Please see http://www.crcna.org/pages/servicelink_commissioning.cfm for suggestions on a commissioning services.

RETURNING HOME

Returning home can be difficult for some who have just experienced a Spirit filled week of service. Below are a number of resources that can help you, your group members, and family and friends at home, process the experience, and learn how they can keep that servant heart at home in everyday life.

PLAN RETURN ACTIVITIES BEFORE YOU DEPART

We encourage you to plan the following activities before you depart for your trip so when you return home, everyone knows what to look forward to.

- Share your experience with your home community—be it at a church service, school assembly, family gathering, etc.
- Plan to do a service project in your community shortly after you return.
- Have a reunion two to three months later to celebrate, reflect, and pray about next steps.

RESOURCES FOR RETURNING HOME

- 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.
- Prayer Journal, published by World Renew DRS. Seven days of focusing on building relationships with individuals, communities, the world, the global church, and God. The last few pages offer debriefing suggestions, how to share your story when you return home, and reading suggestions. Available through our office.
- For Family and Friends at Home: supporting those returning from a mission experience. Adapted from Taylor University, this hand out is available from our office.
- 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.

THANK YOU very much for considering leading a disaster response trip through World Renew. It is our hope that volunteers will grow in Christ as they help rebuild the homes and hope of disaster survivors! We look forward to working with you.

Living Justice. Loving Mercy. Serving Christ.

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