



Travel Communication

Emergency Preparedness in Baja California, MX

Dear Volunteers,

During our annual “Intro to Research” program in Baja California, MX, Ocean Discovery Institute prioritizes the safety of its participants above all else. To that end, we regularly implement an Emergency Preparedness Plan that includes preventative measures as well as emergency response and recovery procedures should any unexpected event occur. When we receive new information, we assess our current plans and make modifications based on expert guidance. We typically seek guidance from the U.S. Consulate and local, community leaders.

Many of our supporters may not be aware of the measures that we regularly undertake, and questions often arise when new Mexican travel advisories go into effect. We thought it would be helpful to provide you some of the safety protocols we use, including additional new measures integrated based on our discussions with international and security leaders.

- Accountability – We ensure accountability of each participant at all times. Mechanisms include:
 - Enrolling in the State Department’s Smart Traveler Enrollment Program
 - Confirming all designated arrivals and departures to and from and Mexico
 - Check in and out procedures for students for all activities
 - Constant oversight with a low-ratio of staff to students

- Safety – We prevent injury and illness when possible and respond quickly and with the best resources at our disposal. Mechanisms include:
 - Every staff member has First Aid/CPR training
 - Safety Officer present with designated role of prevention and response (EMT when possible)
 - First Aid kits at the field station, with each group in the field, and during transit
 - AED device at the field station
 - Regular communication and strong relationship maintained with the local authorities and with US Consulate
 - Field station base within town and near neighbors and resources

- Drive the safest route possible and in daylight hours
 - Avoid unknown areas
 - Follow Department of State and other relevant social media information regarding conditions and review travel advisories
 - Evacuation insurance and multiple-scenario evacuation plans in place
- Communication – We maintain communication between San Diego and Mexico as well as within in Bahía de los Angeles. Because there is no cell service in Bahía de los Angeles and during a portion of the drive there and back, we maintain communication with all participants using:
 - Radios with each car/student group
 - Satellite phone with each car/student group

In addition to our heightened vigilance, we also recommend that all individuals travelling with us:

- Avoid the display signs of wealth (such as expensive cars, watches, or jewelry); they are not needed in Bahía
- Stay in groups if leaving the premises for any reason
- Should they witness or experience any robbery activity, do not resist or become involved, but immediately report such activity to staff or authorities

We will continue to develop additional precautions with our expert advisors and will share new information as it becomes available.

We welcome your questions and concerns. Please inquire and/or contact our Executive Director, Shara Fidler at sfidler@oceandi.org / 619.665.3861.