



*Special Message from:*

## ***Operation Serve International***

*Updated: March 2009*

# MEXICO TRAVEL ALERT

The U.S. State Department periodically issues travel advisories alerting tourists of the dangers in Mexico. In response to calls our office receives from potential volunteers concerned about safety while traveling with Operation Serve, we have issued this **“Travel Release”** to address their concerns regarding these advisories.

The media reports ongoing challenges of this mega city, Mexico City, which is plagued with crime that has escalated based on the money crisis in the country of Mexico. Nevertheless, the State Department Advisory stated that “the greatest increase in violence has occurred near the U.S. border,” **almost ONE THOUSAND MILES** to the north of Mexico City, where we minister. These reports are documented evidence of the dangers of *individual* travel without suggesting precautions of to protect the individual traveler. Some of these reports are **isolated incidents** that make it “newsworthy” of broadcast. *Many actual events occur in locations that **Operation Serve teams do not travel to, nor would a team member travel alone or without national leadership and guidance for any reason.*** Note in the beginning of the report that **millions of U.S. citizens safely visit Mexico each year.**

We are committed to protecting our teams while offering quality ministry to the poor and hurting. All of our team activities are tightly secured and structured. ***We use private buses for transportation.*** *The drivers have served with us for more than 10 years.* Connie & I have served with Operation Serve for over 18 years and Connie personally lived in Mexico City for more than 7 years. Rosi Cortina, our Field Director, has been with OSI for over 17 years. Rosi and national staff are with the teams at all times. Dr. Becky Brett is a US Physician and missionary that lives in Mexico City and has been a part of our ministry team for 3 years. We have hosted more than 5,000 people in Mexico City with the assistance of our Mexican national staff and never had any security or safety issues.

**Since 1991**, Operation Serve has been in regular communication with the State Department in Washington for their travel advisories, as well as the U.S. Embassy and the offices of the local delegations in Mexico City. Weekly, we communicate with the Center of Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta, Georgia (a world health organization) for any health risks and immunization recommendations for the countries we serve in. *Be assured that one of our utmost concerns is the safety and health of our team.* Our ministry has canceled previous team dates based on dangers that were valid concerns for our teams.

**We have provided this “travel alert”** to assure you that your personal safety and health in all the countries we serve in is very important to us. Disease control information, high crime waves in Mexico City, potential political problems, extremist activity and overall unrest in countries like Morocco, Cambodia, Egypt, and Vietnam are issues our ministry regularly investigates in order to protect your health, welfare and safety. *Hundreds of individuals return annually with our ministry to the field and one of the greatest compliments we hear is that they had a wonderful ministry experience and were thoroughly impressed by the commitment to excellence and security of the team.*

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