



Country Welcome Package

El Salvador

2019 Welcome Package

IFRC Country Office

Welcome to El Salvador. We hope you will have a comfortable and pleasant stay. While you are here visiting, there are some precautions we would like you to take to ensure you are safe and leave again with pleasant memories and “mission accomplished”. Below you will find guidelines, hints and some “Do & Don’t’s”.

General Crime/ Security Situation

According to statistics El Salvador is one of the most violent countries in the world. However, considerable amount of the violence in El Salvador is gang-related. Nevertheless, foreigners are sometimes targeted for petty and sometimes violent crime.

As a visitor, you are not likely to experience security threats if you use common sense, limit your movements to secure areas and follow the guidelines provided here. There are few foreign visitors to El Salvador – this is both a negative and a positive point. Negative: foreigners stick out of the crowd. Positive: more than 99% of the people genuinely want you to have a pleasant experience of the country and are eager to help.

The country has a long history of violence and there are many guns around. The threshold of violent behaviour is low. Should you ever find yourself in a possible violent security situation remember not to resist – it is not worth losing your life for your valuables.

Other major security threat is traffic – remember that most Salvadoran drivers have little respect for pedestrians and other drivers.

You may experience natural hazards such as earthquakes, floods, heavy rains and volcanic eruptions.

This document is designed to provide General Security Guidelines for any person (RC/RC Personnel) on mission, visiting or vacationing on the country. Although El Salvador is a potentially dangerous place, *the risks can be negligible if these simple rules and common sense are applied.*

The current Federation Security Phase in El Salvador is **YELLOW**.

All incidents, no matter how small, must be reported to the Reference Center Coordinator (Tel: 503-7870-4715) by the quickest means possible as soon as possible.

A. While in public

- Carry a COPY of your passport and leave the original at a safe location. Also, remember to carry your RC/RC ID.
- Always carry telephone numbers of the Country Coordinator and the Salvadoran Red Cross with you in case of need.
- Always be vigilant and alert for muggers/ robbers/ gangs.
- Do not carry or display large sums of money, especially while shopping. Use credit cards where possible.
- When in public places, like restaurants, do not display your wealth, do not leave mobile phone on table, do not leave your handbag or briefcase hung on chairs or under the table unattended.
- Women should have handbags, back-packs with strong shoulder straps, preferably slung across the body and men should never carry wallets in their rear trouser pockets.
- It is recommended to always carry a few dollars should you be attacked, as it is better to have some money to give an assailant rather than anger them by not having any.
- When walking, beware of traffic – drivers are not used to stop for pedestrians.
- Use only well known Taxi companies like “Acacya” (tel. 252 11000) or hotel approved taxis. Never take a taxi from the street.
- Always lock the passenger doors. Items such as briefcases, purses, and backpacks are tempting targets and should therefore be kept on the floor, not next to you on the seat!
- Be alert when your ride stops at traffic lights or in heavy traffic.
- Be wary of young children at traffic lights. They may steal any loose parts of the car or “mark” a lucrative vehicle for armed robbers waiting in the vicinity.
- It is compulsory to use seatbelts when sitting in the front or rear seat, incl. taxis.
- The use of public transportation (buses, shared taxis) is strictly forbidden. You may use the following international bus companies for international travel: Pullmantur (recommended), KingQuality.
- To reduce the likelihood of being targeted avoid set routines to and from the office and home at the same hours. There have been cases of robbers and kidnappers monitoring movements.
- Never accept beverages, snacks, fruits, food from strangers, especially in hotel, disco bars and at rest places along tourist routes.
- Solicitation of prostitutes, in addition to jeopardising the reputation of the organisation, represents a major security threat to the individual, and will be treated as misconduct subject to disciplinary procedures.
- Solo women travellers should exercise some caution, especially around drunken males.

B. High Risk Areas

- There are no 100% safe neighbourhoods in San Salvador. Even the safer or richer neighbourhoods may have a less affluent areas. The slightly safer neighbourhoods include San Benito (“Zona Rosa”) and Santa Elena area.
- Even in these neighbourhoods walking is to be avoided during daytime and forbidden during the night – unless you are inside an upscale shopping centre (Gran Vía, Multiplaza, Galerias). Avoid Multicentro.
- San Salvador centre should not be visited without somebody accompanying you.
- Many provincial towns are dangerous after dark. In the countryside situation depends community by community. Always consult the NS colleagues or IFRC of the current security situation.
- Immediate area around the Salvadoran RC Headquarters is not very safe. Avoid walking alone in daytime, especially if there are no other people around. After dark going by foot outside of the RC gates is strictly forbidden!

NO GO AREAS!

- Most areas in periferial San Salvador and provincial towns are no go areas without somebody from Salvadoran Red Cross accompanying you.
- Under no circumstances should you walk the streets of the San Salvador or other towns anywhere at night even for the shortest distance. This also includes the so called “Zona Rosa” restaurant district.

C. If you are assaulted:

- Do not provoke your assailants when confronted with hostility or potentially hostile situations.
- Give in to their demands. Be prepared to surrender keys and valuables without argument.
- Avoid eye contact – the thieves do not want to be recognized.
- You will be nervous but so will the thieves so do not do anything to increase the tension, i.e. argue.
- As soon as you are in the clear, call the police and Country Coordinator or Salvadoran Red Cross for assistance.

D. Bank Transactions

- Caution should be exercised at ATM machines or when withdrawing money from banks. Be cautious about who sees you withdrawing cash and where you withdraw it (i.e. well lit busy place vs. dark or deserted areas).
- In case of incident at the bank during private transactions, the Federation is not responsible, nor will delegate insurance cover the loss of cash. So be prudent!

E. Car Jacking

As a visitor you are not allowed to drive in El Salvador. This general advice is if you happen to be in a car driven by somebody else.

The main message is : The car can always be replaced. Do not resist the assailant as the tolerance of use of violence is very low.

F. Medical Assistance/Issues

Malaria is generally not a problem in El Salvador, dengue and Chikungunya could be.

- If you wish to see a doctor, the primary hospital is:

Hospital de Diagnóstico del Paseo General Escalón en San Salvador.

Tel: (503) 2506 2000 / 2528 2000 y fax (503) 2264 3313 / 3312

Red Cross Emergency Centre Supervisor: +503 2239 4964

- In case of severe rapid onset illness contact the Country Coordinator .
- In case of need for medical evacuation, the Country Coordinator will contact the HoZ/SC or designate to facilitate Emergency Medical Evacuation according to Federation MEDEVAC Procedures in El Salvador.

G. Hotel Security

There are all kinds of hotels available in San Salvador. Outside San Salvador you will encounter accommodations in the more touristic areas (the coast and the mountains) but less so in other rural areas.

Some recommended hotels in San Salvador include: Hilton Princess, Crowne Plaza (convenient for longer stays).

Take some preventive measures to avoid unpleasant experiences, even in the best of hotels.

- Never give out your room number to “strangers”.
- Never invite anyone to your room.
- Never leave valuables lying around in your room while you are out, even for the shortest of moments (Lap-top, Mobile phone etc.)
- Never leave a bag or valuables unattended in conference/meeting room, restaurant, swimming pool area, on the beach, in cars, etc.
- Avoid staying in hotels where “dignitaries” stay since they attract all kinds of attention (paparazzi, demonstrations, bomb threats, terrorist threats etc.).
- Avoid staying in a hotel where there is a big conference or meeting, since they also could attract certain elements of above.
- Always use safety lock on the door, even during day-time.
- Always use room-safe for valuables, or use lockable storage for valuables at the front desk, but make sure they issue a receipt for your items. If this facility is not available, then carry the valuables with you in a bag, preferably locked away in the booth of a car.
- Always use a reputable Taxi company, see what the hotel recommends.

H. Fire Safety:

- Upon check-in, always read the hotel fire escape plan, normally found on the inside of the room door.
- Try to get a room either on 3rd or 4th floor.
- Always memorise the nearest emergency exit route.
- Never use elevator during emergency evacuation.
- If you awake with smoke in your room, call front desk immediately to inquire and get advice, then get out and close the door, do not attempt to collect belongings.
- If you cannot leave the room, seal all cracks with wet cloths, switch off fans/air conditioners and make your self visible at the window.
- Keep all doors closed between you and the smoke or fire.
- In case of smoke entering your room, try to move as low as possible to the floor, use a wet cloth to cover your mouth and nose.
- If available, apply fire extinguishers from the bottom to the top of the fire, give multiple spurts as opposed to a single spurt or ejecting all at once.

I. Earthquake Safety

The whole of El Salvador lies on an active seismic zone. Small temblors are a daily occurrence and the risk of a serious earthquake exists.

J. Flood Safety

Flash Floods can occur anywhere in the country, including urban San Salvador.

K. Volcanic activity:

El Salvador has over 15 volcanoes, some of which are active from time to time. The last major eruption took place in 2005.

L. Tsunamis:

Earthquakes are common in El Salvador and many of them take place in the Pacific Ocean, thus making Tsunamis a possible occurrence. ⁱ

M. Beach Hazards:

- Avoid unguarded public beaches as armed robberies occur even in plain daylight while surrounded by other beachgoers. Do not leave your car unattended. Use private beaches by hotels or private clubs.
- Many of the beaches in El Salvador are not suitable for swimming due to waves, riptides and rocks. If surfing or scuba diving be aware of this.
- Consult the Red Cross for good beaches. They have an efficient Lifeguard service.


O. PRIMARY CONTACTS:


IFRC:



Center Reference Center Coordinator and Focal Point	Edgardo Barahona	+503 79893695
Head of Cluster	Nelson Aly Rodriguez	+504 9986 0160
Regional Security Coordinator	Jorge E. Zequeira	+507 6949 5546
SALVADORAN RED CROSS: Director General	Rigoberto Hernández	+503 7604 4880
Emergency Operation Center		+503 2239 4930


Have a safe and pleasant stay!

ANNEX 1: Advice in case of

Natural hazard	Before	During	After
<p style="text-align: center;">Earthquake</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify evacuation routes - Identify safe places in each room: - Under sturdy furniture, such as heavy desk or table; against an inside wall - Away from where glass could fall or heavy furniture could fall over 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If you're indoors, stay there. Get under -- and hold . - If you're in an office building, stay away from windows and outside walls and do not use the elevator. - If you're outside, get into the open. Stay clear of buildings, power lines or anything else that could fall on you. If you're driving, move the car out of traffic and stop. Avoid parking under or on bridges or overpasses. Try to get clear of trees, light posts, signs and power lines. When you resume driving, watch out for road hazards. - If you're in a mountainous area, beware of the potential for landslides. Likewise, if you're near the ocean, be aware that tsunamis are associated with large earthquakes. Get to high ground. - If you're in a crowded public place, avoid panicking and do not rush for the exit. Stay low and cover your head and neck with your hands and arms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Check for fire or fire hazards. If you smell gas, shut off the main gas valve. If there's evidence of damage to electrical wiring, shut off the power at the control box. - If the phone is working, only use it in case of emergency. Likewise, avoid driving if possible to keep the streets clear for emergency vehicles. - Listen to the radio for important information and instructions. Remember that aftershocks, sometimes large enough to cause damage in their own right, generally follow large quakes.

<p style="text-align: center;">Floods</p> 	<p>Be alert.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monitor your surroundings. - Monitor NOAA Weather Radio, local television and radio stations, or go to www.weather.gov. <p>If a flash flood warning is issued during your visit :</p> <p>Climb to safety immediately.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Flash floods develop quickly. Do not wait until you see rising water. - Get out of low areas subject to flooding. - If driving, do not drive through flooded roadways! <p>Be prepared to evacuate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify places to go. - Identify alternative travel routes that are not prone to flooding. - Fill your car's gas tank. <p>Protect yourself and others.</p>	<p>Be alert.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monitor your surroundings. - Monitor NOAA Weather Radio, local television and radio stations, or go to www.weather.gov. <p>Don't drive unless you have to. If you must drive, travel with care.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Make sure your vehicle has enough fuel. - Watch for washed out roads, earth slides, and downed trees or power lines. - Be especially cautious at night, when it is harder to recognize flood dangers. <p>NEVER drive through flooded roadways. STOP! Turn Around Don't Drown.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The roadbed may be washed out. You can lose control of your vehicle in only a few inches of water. - Your car may float. Vehicles can be swept away by less than 2 feet of water. - Do not drive around a barricade. Turn around and go another way! <p>Get to high ground – Climb to safety!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Get out of low areas that may be subject to flooding. - Avoid already-flooded areas and do not attempt to cross flowing water. - Stay away from power lines and electrical wires. <p>Evacuate immediately, if you think you are at risk or are advised to do so!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Act quickly. Save yourself, not your belongings. 	<p>Wait until it is safe to return.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monitor NOAA Weather Radio or local television and radio stations. - Do not return to flooded areas until authorities indicate it is safe to do so. <p>Travel with care.</p> <p>Follow recommended routes. DO NOT sightsee.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Watch for washed out roads, earth slides, and downed trees or power lines. - Stay away from downed power lines. <p>If a building was flooded, check for safety before entering.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do not enter a building if it is still flooded or surrounded by floodwater. - Check for structural damage. Inspect foundations for cracks or other damage. - Turn off any outside gas lines at the meter tank. - Do not enter a building that has flooded until local building officials have inspected it for safety.
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<p style="text-align: center;">Tsunami</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pick or use already assigned inland evacuation location that is elevated and as far away from the coast as regrouping point. Make sure that all delegates and staff know the location and the fastest way there. Take traffic into consideration when planning the route. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Move at once to higher ground when you hear of a tsunami warning - Never go to the beach to watch a tsunami 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Remember that just because the water has gone, the danger may still be there. - Stay out of buildings if surrounded by water and use extreme caution when entering these buildings. There may be hidden damage, the foundations may have been weakened, the electric system may have short-circuited and snakes may have ended up inside. - Don't drink flood water – it may have been contaminated. - Be aware of areas where water has receded: roads may have weakened and could collapse under the weight of a car. - Stay away from downed power lines.
<p style="text-align: center;">Mudslides</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mudslides occur during and after torrential rains; make sure that your housing is not located to a zone prone to mudslides. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - When indoors during a mudslide; stay inside and take cover under a desk, table or other piece of sturdy furniture. - When outdoors try to get out of the path of the landslide. If escape is not possible curl up into a tight ball and protect your head. - If driving and come to a mudslide area, turn around and take a different route. - If your car stalls, abandon it and climb to higher ground. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - When indoors during a mudslide; stay inside and take cover under a desk, table or other piece of sturdy furniture. - When outdoors try to get out of the path of the landslide. If escape is not possible curl up into a tight ball and protect your head. - If driving and come to a mudslide area, turn around and take a different route. - If your car stalls, abandon it and climb to higher ground.

<p>Volcanic Eruption</p>  <p>#1020104</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Identify the evacuation routes.- Avoid areas downwind of the volcano.- Get to high ground away from the eruption- Procure a pair of goggles and a disposable breathing mask for the delegate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Close all windows and furnace or fireplace fluids. Use breathing mask or cloth to cover your breathing.- Store all equipment and machinery inside a garage or barn.- Cover food and drink to avoid contact with the ashes.”- Avoid driving as ash may clog the engine	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Only authorities can say when it is safe to return to your lodging.
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