Habitat for Humanity RV Care-A-Vanners  
*Team leader guidelines*

Thank you for your interest in becoming a team leader for Habitat for Humanity RV Care-A-Vanner builds! We hope these guidelines will help you plan a smooth and enjoyable build experience for you and your team.

**TEAM LEADER QUALIFICATIONS**  
Team leaders must:  
- Have participated in at least three RV Care-A-Vanner builds.  
- Be available to serve as leaders for the duration of the build.  
- Be good communicators.  
- Be spiritually mature.  
- Be willing and able to motivate by example.  
- Have a solid understanding of the Habitat mission and ministry.  
- Have strong organizational skills and be detail-oriented.  

Construction experience is helpful, but not necessary.

**PRELIMINARY BUILD SCHEDULING**  
Planning a build begins when a local affiliate requests a team of RV Care-A-Vanners from the Habitat for Humanity International headquarters in Americus, Georgia. The RV coordinator supplies the affiliate with hosting guidelines and other information to help the affiliate understand the characteristics and requirements for an RV build. The work schedule and number of RVs requested depend on the ability of the affiliate to provide tasks, materials and adequate RV parking.

Builds in need of a team leader will be included in the [monthly RV Care-A-Vanner e-newsletter](mailto:rvinfodesk@habitat.org). Check the update or contact the RV coordinator ([rvinfodesk@habitat.org](mailto:rvinfodesk@habitat.org), 229-410-7534 or 1-800-HABITAT ext. 7534) to find a build to lead and sign up.

**TEAM LEADER RESPONSIBILITIES**

**Six months before the build**  
- Familiarize yourself with local and worldwide Habitat for Humanity programs, Habitat’s mission and the RV Care-A-Vanners program so you can orient first-time participants.  
- Discuss build details with the RV coordinator, who will provide you with the name and contact information for the host affiliate.  
- Contact the host affiliate to complete the [RV Care-A-Vanners build details information checklist for team leaders](http://example.com). Discuss:  
  - RV parking site adequacy (see below).  
  - Arrival and departure times.  
  - Orientation meeting location, time and details.  
  - Work and activity schedule.  
  - On-site construction supervision.  
  - Emergency contact number and mail forwarding address.  
  - Whether affiliate will provide nametags.

**Three months prior to the build**  
- Confirm details with the affiliates:  
  - RV parking arrangements made by the affiliate are appropriate. Note that new host affiliates may not be familiar with RVs.  
    - Make sure the affiliate understands that electric (at least 30 amp), water and a dump site must be accessible.
- If team members are to stay at a commercial RV park, ask the affiliate should try to negotiate reduced rates.
- Determine whether pets are permitted, how payment may be made (credit card, check, etc.), and availability of Internet.
- Jointly develop a weather-related emergency evacuation plan.
- Ask if there is a meeting area that the team can use for potluck dinners, meetings, game night, etc.
  - Whether the affiliate will provide on-site construction supervision every day. This is important; even experienced builders on the team will need direction to ensure they adhere to local building codes and construction methods preferred by the affiliate.
  - Work schedule and type of work the group will likely do. Remember this may change by the time of the build due to permit delays, weather, local volunteer efforts, etc.
  - Plan for meals. While not mandatory, you may encourage the affiliate to enlist local churches, businesses and community groups to provide lunches and perhaps coffee or snacks on site.
  - Welcome gathering plans. The affiliate is asked to plan a welcome gathering so the team can meet the affiliate members and partner families. At this time the affiliate should explain how homeowners are selected and other pertinent information. This and a farewell gathering, which the affiliate may also plan, will probably be informal events, such as spaghetti or a potluck dinner, or dessert at a local church, the build site or the RV parking area.
    - The affiliate should provide a simple map of the town and general information on area attractions and location of post office, laundry, groceries, churches, hospital, etc. These are usually distributed at the orientation meeting.
    - Availability of drinking water, a first-aid kit and toilet facility on the build site. Ensure a cell phone should be accessible on site and the local emergency numbers (EMS, fire, police) will be readily available. (911 does not always connect locally from a cell phone.)
    - Plans for morning devotions. Discuss whether these will be led by the affiliate or someone from the RV group.
    - As soon as possible after you get a team roster from the RV coordinator at Habitat for Humanity International, e-mail or send a letter to team members, carbon copying the RV coordinator. Include location and directions to the RV parking site (with map, if available), a schedule of work hours, information regarding planned meals and activities, tentative work to be done, special tools requested, seasonal climate, local mail forwarding address, emergency contact number to leave with folks at home, etc.
      A sample RV participant orientation e-mail and optional team member questionnaire are available.
    - If team members notify you that they will be unable to attend the build, make it clear that they must notify the RV Care-A-Vanner coordinator. The RV coordinator will keep you informed of changes in the roster. Anyone not signed up through the RV coordinator should not be permitted to attend your RV build.

One to two weeks before the build
- Do a final check with the affiliate to confirm details and let them know exactly when you will arrive.
- Discuss with the affiliate opportunities to help draw positive community and media attention. Consider offering for Care-A-Vanners to speak at local civic meetings and churches.
- Team leaders may wish to visit the hosting affiliate in advance to meet their representatives, tour the build site, verify that RV parking arrangements are adequate and verify directions to camping and build site. If a personal visit is not possible the team leaders need to arrive at least a day early.

Beginning the build
- Greet team members as they arrive.
- Provide each Care-A-Vanner with a nametag made either by the affiliate or the team leader (see Care-A-Vanner nametag template. Nametags should be worn at the build site, at all team functions and preferably on individual trips into the community.
- Give release of liability/emergency contact forms, and a final list of team members with contact info to each team member.
Organize a team “get to know each other” gathering the afternoon of arrival, before the affiliate orientation. During the gathering you may wish to:

- Encourage team members to share something about themselves, including what brought them to Habitat.
- Confirm directions to the build site, work hours, etc.
- Collect the completed release of liability/emergency contact forms. Keep these with you at the work site and parking area. At the end of the build give them to the affiliate, which needs to keep them on file for three years.
- Distribute maps, directions to local services, emergency shelter, hospital, etc.
- Outline meal plans. Confirm special dietary requirements, special evening meals planned, etc.
- Suggest or arrange leisure-time group activities as appropriate. Recruit a social planner from the team if necessary.
- Ask for volunteers to lead morning devotions, if this is to be the team’s responsibility.
- Discuss the importance of completing and returning online evaluations forms. The RV coordinator will send you the online link at the conclusion of each build. Reiterate that tactful frankness is appreciated and that names are optional.
- Stress safety! Review safety guidelines and cover any special safety concerns that may exist at the build site. Stress that even though the team leader and construction supervisor are always looking out for safety, each team member is ultimately responsible for his or her own well-being.
- Explain that each affiliate is autonomous and that procedures, techniques and materials used vary from location to location. Stress the importance of working as a team and the need to focus on serving the affiliate’s needs. We do things the way the affiliate wants them done.

During the build

- Assemble the team at the build site each morning for devotions and announcements about daily happenings and special events.
- The primary responsibilities of the team leader is organizing, mediating, coordinating and leading to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to make a meaningful contribution and to learn new skills. Hands-on building is secondary to these responsibilities.
- Do not perform construction work yourself until all team members are engaged in meaningful work.
- If a member does not have a job, stop what you are doing and find him or her a meaningful task, which may require giving up yours.
- Serve as liaison between team participants and the construction supervisor, helping provide opportunities for each team member to learn new skills and participate fully in construction activities according to his or her preference and the needs of the affiliate. Make sure that team members have as much meaningful work as they want. If possible, arrange a time to work with the partner family.
- It is vitally important that you do nothing to degrade the efforts of the affiliate. If you or a team member finds something upsetting, you should bring it to the attention of the on-site supervisor who will resolve your concern or switch the offended person to another task. Avoid criticizing work previously done by local or other volunteers.

- Keep tabs on health issues and remain focused on safety.
- Encourage team members to use sunscreen, take breaks and drink water often.
- Make sure all team members know the location of the first-aid kit and the emergency phone, as well as the appropriate EMS numbers.
- Help uphold Habitat policies, including the minor policy:

  In recognition of the federal labor laws regarding children and the potential risk to children’s safety of a construction site, no one under the age of 16 should be allowed on a construction site while construction is going on.

  Children ages 16 and 17 may perform general construction work but may not engage in certain activities that are considered ultra hazardous. These include the use of power tools, motor vehicles, demolition, roofing or working from a height of six feet or more, and excavation operations or participating in blitz builds.

- Fill out an [incident report](#) if any situations of note arise during the build.
If the affiliate desires, represent your build team and the Habitat RV Care-A-Vanner program to local media or community organizations, or designate a knowledgeable and willing team member to do so.

- Keep track of team hours worked each day for reporting to the Care-A-Vanner RV Coordinator after the build.
  - You may request that the affiliate provide a letter to each participant stating the total hours, dates and place worked as documentation for tax purposes.
- At the end of the build, give team members the opportunity to offer a donation to the host affiliate or the Care-A-Vanner program (forward to the RV coordinator).

**After the build**

- Promptly send thank-you cards to all community organizations that have donated food, conducted devotions or otherwise contributed to the build (e.g., churches that prepared meals or donated space, etc.). Consider writing a thank-you note to the community and sending it to the local newspaper opinion page.
- Send or e-mail thank-you notes to the host affiliate and each build team participant.
- Fill out the online evaluation, sent via e-mail by the RV Care-A-Vanner coordinator, and encourage participants to fill out theirs. Names on evaluation forms are optional. We value your feedback!
- Send the RV Coordinator the names of team members you feel would make good team leaders and who may be interested in serving.

**THANK YOU**

You are a vital and valued volunteer! We are able to operate the RV Care-A-Vanner program—and serve more Habitat families—because of your leadership. On behalf of Habitat for Humanity International, affiliates you support, and hundreds of thousands of partner families, thank you.