



# Binational Quarterly News

Binational Emergency Medical Care Committee  
Fall 2007

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## 1. ANNOUNCEMENTS

### REFER A MEMBER AND WIN!

BEMCC begins its first quarterly raffle on October 31st. This raffle is a new way for BEMCC to show appreciation for members who refer new members.

First prize winner will enjoy a two-night stay at the Rosarito Beach Hotel; second prize winner receives a [one-year BEMCC Life Saver Card](#) and third prize winner takes home a free BEMCC t-shirt. We will mention Fall 2007 winners in the next newsletter.

How do you get your name into the raffle? It's easy! When new members [sign up](#) for the first time and they mention a referral name, we will put that name into the raffle. The [new PDF form](#) on our site has a field that asks how you heard about BEMCC. Use that field to mention the person who referred you. The [online form](#) also has a new section where you can specify a referral name.

Good luck and thanks to all who help spread the word about BEMCC!

### EMERGENCY CONTACT HANDBOOK COMING SOON!

BEMCC will soon make an emergency contacts handbook available for purchase. The upcoming handbook will contain hundreds of contacts, for both sides of the border, of hospitals, ambulances, police and fire departments, immigration offices and much, much more.

Initial production for this invaluable handbook is pending funding. In the meanwhile, we urge you to [contact BEMCC](#) for any contact information you may need when planning a trip into Mexico.

## 2. TESTIMONIAL - SPECIAL AGENT JOHN ZINNA

*"[If they would have] told me I would be going back on an ambulance, I would have given up hope - mentally I would have given up. I was mentally fighting to stay alive." Agent John Zinna*

*"Doctors have considered me a medical miracle. I consider the miracle the friends who helped me and cared. It was the effort of everybody involved. Everybody laid a foundation for me to recover." Agent John Zinna*

*Magical. Amazing communications skills.* These are the phrases Special Agent John Zinna utters repeatedly to describe the day when BEMCC coordinated events that would save his life. [More...](#)

## 3. HOW TO STAY INSURED FOR FREE ON MEXICAN TOLL ROADS

Many of our Baja bound members already know that toll roads are the way to go when driving in Mexico, but did you know that your toll road receipt insures you in the case of an accident? Banobras, the Mexican agency that handles toll roads, will insure up to \$109,000 PESOS (\$10,000 USD) for medical charges and up to \$50,000 PESOS (\$4,500 USD) in funeral expenses in the case anything happens while driving on a Mexican toll road.

Your toll road receipt is your insurance so you MUST keep it. To claim reimbursement for your damages call the number on the back of your receipt. If you have trouble reaching someone at the number, you may call the U.S. Consulate. If you are treated in a Tijuana hospital, you may be able to expedite your claims since certain hospitals in Tijuana have contracts with Banobras. If you find it difficult to seek reimbursement, call BEMCC to help you do so.

Remember, always be safe and designate a sober driver if you will be drinking. Banobras does not reimburse for damages in the case of an accident caused by a drunk driver.

#### **4. HUMANITARIAN VISAS: WHAT THEY ARE AND HOW TO GET ONE**

What is a humanitarian visa? Humanitarian visas are unique to our region - that is, they apply to the San Ysidro, Otay Mesa and Calexico Ports of Entry. They are granted only in emergency situations.

##### **Who can obtain a Humanitarian Visa?**

- Mexican patients who wish to receive emergency medical care in the U.S.
- Immediate family members, in life and death situations when the presence of an immediate family member is needed at a gravely ill patient's side in the U.S.
- Immediate family members wishing to attend funeral services in the U.S.

##### **What is required to obtain a Humanitarian Visa?**

- Prior arrangements with the U.S. Customs and Border Protection.
- For patients, a signed letter from a doctor stating the need for emergency care.
- For family members, a signed letter from the doctor, hospital official or funeral home, requesting the visit of the immediate family member.
- Proof that the patient or family member will not be a financial burden to the U.S.
- Identification information such as full name, date of birth, time and place of appointment in the U.S. and time and place of planned border crossing.
- A \$520 fee (in most cases).
- Two forms of ID

##### **How does one request a humanitarian visa?**

Requests can be made to the U.S. Customs and Border Protection, through U.S. Embassies (American Consulate in Tijuana, Mexico) and the Mexican Consulate. Assistance with the request can be provided by BEMCC.

#### **5. UPDATE: NEW PASSPORT REQUIREMENTS**

The first phase of the new passport law that requires passports for air travelers entering the United States from the Caribbean, Bermuda, Mexico and Canada went into effect on January 23, 2007. Since then, the U.S. Federal Government has allowed flexibility to those who have applied for but not yet received their passports. In lieu of passports, border officials have been accepting government issued IDs and official proof from the Department of Homeland Security that a passport has been applied for. However, this flexibility ends on September 30, 2007.

Please note that the second phase of this new law that affects land and sea travelers can begin as early as January 31, 2008 though it could likely be extended.

To avoid complications, we urge you to apply for your passport as soon as possible. Regular processing takes between 10 to 12 weeks. Expedited passport processing takes between two and three weeks. If you're traveling within six months of your passport's expiration date, it is recommended that you apply for a renewal as soon as possible because a nearing expiration date could cause complications when entering the U.S.

For more information:

[http://www.dhs.gov/xtrvlsec/crossingborders/whtibasics.shtm/cbpmc\\_2223.html](http://www.dhs.gov/xtrvlsec/crossingborders/whtibasics.shtm/cbpmc_2223.html)

<http://travel.state.gov/travel/cbpmc>

## 6. BAJA 1000

No, this isn't a duplicate of last newsletter's article - there's actually another Baja race coming up! Baja 1000 race activities take place between November 10 - 16, 2007 beginning in Tijuana and ending in Cabo San Lucas. This isn't news for many of our aficionado members who attended the Baja 500 in June. Many attended and had a blast. We know you all are pros, but we'd just like to remind you of a few things to help keep you safe.

- Pre-running starts October 13th. Remember, most accidents happen before and after the race, so keep your guards up and proceed with caution.
- When traveling on a toll road, keep your receipts. They can potentially cover costs for any damages incurred while traveling on a Mexican toll road. (See our [toll road insurance article](#)).
- Don't travel into Baja without a satellite phone. A satellite phone is crucial to reaching someone for help in remote areas where you normally wouldn't get reception.
- [Renew your BEMCC membership](#) before pre-running and remind your friends to sign up for one as well.
- If you are in a life threatening situation, remember to call BEMCC for help!

## 7. FRIENDS OF BEMCC

As some of you might already know, BEMCC survives on membership fees and support from grants and donations alone. BEMCC does not receive Federal or State funding from either side of the border due to obvious complications in jurisdiction. We'd like to take this opportunity to thank those who've helped keep BEMCC's doors open.

### The Stephenson Pope Babcock Foundation

This foundation has made annual donations since 1991. Their support helps maintain a billboard advertisement at the U.S.-Mexico Border.

### The U.S. Coast Guard

The U.S. Coast Guard has maintained a close relationship with BEMCC since 1977. Their continued efforts and support have contributed to many lives saved.

### Baja UTV

[Baja UTV](#) provides unique off-road tours in Baja California, Mexico. They have demonstrated the value of BEMCC's services by including a BEMCC membership as part of their package.

### Omar Elizondo

A special thank you to Omar Elizondo for a generous donation made in September. Elizondo was recently transported out of Cabo San Lucas, Mexico to Houston, Texas. We will bring you his story in the Winter Newsletter.

### Members Like You!

Your membership fees provide us with the resources to save lives. You never know when that life might be yours, so remember to [renew your annual membership](#). Donations beyond the \$30.00 membership fee are also appreciated. Thanks for being a member and for helping us spread the word!