COVID-19 Field/off-campus work SAFETY Plan Template for research with human participants

# Introduction

This is a safety plan template and is based upon the hierarchy of controls model of risk management. The premise is to prioritize and implement controls that are known to be most effective (removing/eliminating exposure vs using PPE). The image in Figure 1 depicts this model using COVID-19 specific controls.

Least Effective

Most Effective

**Figure 1: Hierarchy of controls as it applies to COVID-19**

# Purpose

This document has been designed to assist principal investigators and researchers in establishing appropriate protocols to minimize risk for field/off-campus work occurring in-person with human participants during COVID-19. Off campus human participant research applies to studies conducted in locations other than UWaterloo campuses and includes but is not limited to the following:

* Public spaces (parks, streets, town squares)
* Private indoor and outdoor settings (homes, properties, offices, businesses)
* Spaces under the jurisdiction or authority of an organization or entity (e.g., schools, community centers, other post-secondary institutions, government offices, etc.)
* Health facilities and clinics under the authority of a health authority, hospital, health region
* Lands and facilities under the authority of an Indigenous nation(s) or controlled access community (e.g., Mennonite community)

# Instructions for use

Sections in Part A do not require any data to be submitted, they may be left blank. All sections in Part B must be completed.

To use this template, **insert your instructions in the relevant sections.** Once complete, review with all fieldwork employees, supervisors, students, and relevant persons at the host site/location(s).

Review involves going through the processes you have established and getting acknowledgement from all members of the work/research group and relevant persons at the host site/location(s) that they understand and will comply with the plan.

**Notes**

* Develop one plan per fieldwork project
* A [Fieldwork Risk Management Form](https://uwaterloo.ca/safety-office/occupational-health-safety/fieldwork) must also be approved
* You will need to obtain acknowledgement from all fieldwork employees, supervisors, and students
* You will need to sign the plan at the end signifying that you will enact the plan as outlined as well as be accountable for enforcing this plan
* At minimum, all fieldwork/off-campus research safety plans should contain the following elements:
  + Activities that do not require in-person interactions with study participants are to be done remotely
  + Meetings or contacts with study participants to arrange visits, complete questionnaires, and consent should be held virtually or by phone
  + Suitable pandemic safety precautions must be in place at all times, including physical distancing and hand hygiene
  + You will need to understand and demonstrate in this plan how you intend on meeting the COVID-19 protocols for any region/province community, and or organization that you will be visiting. Please reference these where applicable. If requirements differ between the those used here at UW, and another location, you are expected to the more prescriptive requirements.
  + All research must be conducted in accordance with applicable safety requirements and best practices
  + No operation or fieldwork should be carried out without adequate training and supervision
  + The [Working Alone Guideline](https://uwaterloo.ca/safety-office/occupational-health-safety/working-alone-guideline) must be followed when deploying employees or students in any operation or fieldwork
  + Fieldwork requiring use of a boat is not permitted unless physical distancing of at least two meters can be maintained
  + Travel to, or in proximity to, Indigenous communities or on Indigenous land to undertake field research is normally not permitted
  + International travel is not permitted, including to the USA,and [domestic travel](https://uwaterloo.ca/coronavirus/health-and-travel-guidance#travel) will be assessed on a case-by-case basis
  + Permissions must be obtained and be current for use of off-campus locations or facilities (e.g., businesses, organizations, field stations, greenhouses, farms, municipal land) by the authority responsible for these locations or facilities
    - These updated permissions will need to be in place before your field work research request is given final approval
    - Respect the wishes to limit visitors to and from these areas
    - Permission to access national and provincial parks must be obtained from the relevant authorities
  + Appropriate precautions must be in place and documented to protect employees, students, and the larger community
  + Limit interaction with the general public
  + Avoid sharing equipment
  + The designation and frequency for cleaning of equipment, vehicles, field stations and other high-touch surfaces
  + An outline of when non-medical masks are required

PART A

# 1.0 Employee Training

Before performing fieldwork or coming back to campus, employees, students, and researchers must complete the following training:

* Mandatory [“Return to Campus Safety during COVID-19” (SO 2036)](https://uwaterloo.ca/safety-office/training/returning-campus-safely-during-covid-19) online training
* Training from the PI on the new practices outlined in this procedure

# 2.0 Responsibilities

## 2.1 Supervisor

* Develop this plan to meet [Health & Safety Guidance during COVID-19](https://uwaterloo.ca/coronavirus/return-campus/workplace-health-and-safety-guidance) and any requirements for any host site(s) or location(s) being visited.
* Prior to deployment, meet with your employees, students, and research team prior to starting fieldwork. Orientation shall cover all items within this plan.
* Prior to deployment, discuss the requirements of this plan with relevant contact person(s) at the host site(s) or location(s).
* Enforce all criteria within this plan.
* Ensure appropriate hand hygiene and surface disinfection supplies are provided to all fieldwork employees, students, and research team.
* Actively review site/location pandemic and travel advisories in case adjustments to research protocols must be made.
* Review this plan at least monthly to:
  + Identify hazards as per the Occupational Health and Safety Act
  + Ensure the adequacy and adherence to this safety plan.

## 2.2 Employees and Students

* Follow all guidance within this plan.
* Notify their supervisor if supplies are not sufficient to maintain hand hygiene and surface decontamination requirements.
* Notify their supervisor of any hazards that are discovered while working.
* Do not conduct field/off-campus work if ill and report all illnesses using the process outlined in section 3.2 Illness and Absence Reporting.

# 3.0 Health Protocols

## 3.1 Self-Assessment Screening

To minimize risk, it is imperative that employees and students do not come to campus or conduct field/off-campus work when ill. For this reason, the University requires that employees and students monitor themselves daily for symptoms of COVID-19. The COVID-19 self-assessment tool, found in the [WatSAFE app](http://www.uwaterloo.ca/watsafe) and on the [University’s Health Protocols site](https://uwaterloo.ca/coronavirus/health-and-travel-guidance), provides clear directions on how to self-assess.

## 3.2 Illness and Absence Reporting

Do not participate in fieldwork or allow a member of your team to participate if exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms. Review and follow the [University’s Health Protocols](https://uwaterloo.ca/coronavirus/return-campus/workplace-health-and-safety-guidance/health-protocols) at all times.

# 4.0 Hand Hygiene

Hand hygiene should be performed regularly throughout the day. At minimum, fieldwork employees, supervisors, students, and study participants shall wash hands or perform hand sanitization:

* After using the washroom, before eating, and when finished work for the day
* When they remove gloves
* After using shared equipment

Hand washing is the preferred method of hand hygiene. If hands are soiled (dirt, debris, oils, grease, and other contaminants), hand sanitizers will not be effective. Use soap and warm water in these cases. If work consistently causes hands to be soiled, hand washing facilities need to be provided and accessible (portable water jug/sink and soap).

Communicate these requirements to your employees and students before they embark on field/off-campus work.

# 5.0 Group PRotective Equipment (GPE)

Group protective equipment (GPE) requirements should be based upon local requirements of the area of research. If physical distancing is not be possible for specific tasks or specific situations, GPE such as cloth face coverings must be used. More information regarding other protective equipment:

* Where there is no human contact, gloves are not required to protect against COVID-19. Hand hygiene is more effective.
* Respirators and surgical face masks are not recommended for general use to protect the public against one another. However, when interacting with Human Participants, UW expects our researchers to do what is needed to ensure the risk to participants and themselves is low. The following guidance can be used to determine masking requirements:
  + In cases where physical distancing of 2 m is not possible, disposable masks should be provided to participants, and used by researchers.
  + When the study involves exertion – ASTM level 2 medical grade masks should be provided to participants and used researchers. Exertion refers to an elevation in heart rate and breathing rate for a prolonged period of time, or during heavy lifting or strenuous activity.
  + Note – despite this guidance, evaluation of masking requirements will be made on a case by case basis.
* Rubber gloves for cleaning can be shared if proper hand hygiene is performed before and after use.
* When face shields and safety goggles are used, they should be individually provided and wiped with a disinfectant before and after each use.
* When safety barriers (plexiglass) are used, they should be wiped with a disinfectant before and after each use.

PART B

**Principal Investigator:**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Field/Off-campus Location:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

# 1.0 Adjust the workplace - Physical Distancing

* Outline the plan to ensure that 2m physical distancing can be maintained in the field or when off-campus.
  + Include distancing between fieldwork employees, supervisors and students, between study participants and local contacts, and the public.
* Outline safety measures to ensure fieldwork employees, supervisors and students travel safely to and from the field site(s)/study location(s).
* Outline safety measures if accommodations are required, including how fieldwork employees, supervisors and students will be separated with respect to:
* Sleeping quarters
* Washroom facilities
* Meal plans, including food preparation and eating (e.g., how will these plans protect fieldwork employees, students, research team, and the community?)

**Describe your plan here.** Note any specific measures regarding GPE that need to be addressed for the work/study conditions.

Click or tap here to enter text.

# 2.0 Surface Decontamination

Surface decontamination of work areas and equipment is the responsibility of the supervisor or PI. At minimum, most surfaces should be disinfected twice per day. Fill out the sections below to outline decontamination plans.

## 2.1 SHARED equipment Decontamination

Complete the table below regarding the disinfection details for the shared equipment (including vehicles) when in the field/off-campus activities.

**Table 1: Shared equipment disinfection details**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Equipment Identifier** | **Disinfectant** | **Concentration** | **Contact time** | **Frequency of disinfection** |
| Equipment used with and by employees |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |

Notes on surface disinfection:

* Ensure the disinfectant chosen is appropriate for the surface being disinfected.
* Ensure there is enough disinfectant to last for the course of the fieldwork.
* All work surfaces should be decontaminated twice daily. In most situations, this means before work begins and once work has concluded.

## 2.2 High-touch area Decontamination (indoor areas)

All high-touch surfaces should be disinfected twice daily. Designate responsible persons and a schedule for this to be done. Complete the table below.

**Table 2: High touch surface disinfection summary table.**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Item Identifier** | **Disinfectant** | **Responsible Person** | **Schedule** | **Frequency of disinfection** |
| Doorknobs, cupboard handles, kitchen appliances |  |  |  |  |
| Faucets and washroom fixtures |  |  |  |  |
| Light switches |  |  |  |  |
| Vehicle steering wheel, door handles |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |

[Click here](https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/factsheet-covid-19-environmental-cleaning.pdf?la=en) for more information on the disinfection of surfaces:

# 3.0 contingency plan

All field/off-campus work is required to have a contingency plan. This must describe actions that will be taken if a fieldwork employee, supervisor, or student has symptoms of COVID-19, tests positive for COVID-19, or is required to self-isolate. It must include actions to be taken if a study participant has symptoms of COVID-19 or tests positive for COVID-19. It also includes the need to immediately respond to University, regional or provincial directions to cease field/off-campus work operations. Responsibility must be assigned to individuals within your group to ensure that field/off-campus work can be safely and appropriately scaled back or stopped on short notice, including travel and accommodation needs. Ensure you reference any requirement of the Region, Province, or area you are in if they are different than the ones used at Waterloo.

**Describe your contingency plan here:**

Click or tap here to enter text.

# 4.0 Acknowledgements

**Field/off-campus employee, supervisor and student acknowledgements**

By printing and signing my name in the table below, I acknowledge that I have been trained on the procedures outlined in this document, that I have been consulted and have no reservations with the safety precautions and processes that will be in place to conduct research described in the request to conduct fieldwork.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Employee Name** | **Signature** | **Date** |
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**Principal Investigator acknowledgement**

I acknowledge that I am responsible for the implementation of all procedures outlined in this document to reduce infection risk of COVID-19. Those found not following these directives will be subjected to corrective action up to and including disciplinary measures.

**Principal Investigator name:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Principal Investigator signature:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_