

## Safety Guidelines for Field Work at the UWM Field Station

*Last Review: 4/2022*

*Revision History:*

Learn about potentially hazardous plants, animals, terrain, and weather conditions. Especially review the list below. A first aid kit is maintained at the Field Station Building. If serious medical attention is needed, call 911. For help with minor medical attention call the Field Station number, (262) 675-6844.

If you are injured while working in the field, report it to your immediate supervisor.

--If you are faculty, staff, graduate teaching or graduate project assistants, graduate student research assistant or undergraduate student employee (anyone pay rolled by UWM) complete: [Employee's Work Injury and Illness Report\\*](#)

--If you are a, Volunteer, undergraduate student not employed by UWM or an Undergraduate SURF grant recipient complete: General Incident Report 300A2. (Form is available at <https://uwm.edu/safety-health/forms/>)\*

### Primary risks and precautions specific to work at the UWM Field Station:

- **For work in remote (off-boardwalk) areas of the Cedarburg Bog:**
  - Never go into the Bog without a compass or GPS device and the knowledge to use it, getting lost is easy.
  - Take a cell phone with you so that you can call for help if needed.
  - Make sure that you notify Field Station staff that you are going into the Bog including where you are going and your planned route to get there. Field Station staff can provide advice regarding the best access points and routes.
  - **Poison sumac**, a small to large shrub, is ubiquitous in the Bog. It has the same toxic oil as poison ivy on the surface of the plant, winter and summer. It is impossible to travel through the Bog (off boardwalk) and not contact poison sumac; you cannot “watch-out” for it. If you know that you have a severe allergy to poison ivy, you should not go off boardwalk at all. Here is how to avoid getting poison sumac if you are not severely allergic: 1) Wear long pants and shirt, 2) When you get out of the Bog, take a thorough shower as soon as possible (we have showers at the Station), 3) Wash thoroughly with Fels-Naptha laundry soap (available at the Station) or Technu soap; these soaps remove the heavy oil rather than spreading it, 4) Put all your field clothing in a bag and be careful with it until it is laundered.
  - The most common risk of injury in the Bog (other than poison sumac) is a severe poke in the eye. Wear safety glasses; they also make travel through the Bog more comfortable because you don't have to always worry about your eyes.
  - Winter, when the Bog is frozen, is the easiest time to travel through the Bog. There is a severe risk of hypothermia if you were to break through the ice. There are a few places in the Bog that are known to frequently have “bad ice” most winters. Review your route in the Bog with Field Station staff who can tell you where to expect weak ice.
  
- **Poison ivy** – Learn to identify it; cover up; never wear anything but closed, solid shoes.

- **Stinging insects** – Many species of bees, wasps and hornets (If you are allergic, make sure you carry your emergency medication, e.g. EpiPen). There are two that are most aggressive, common, and pose the greatest risk:
  - German yellow jackets – nest in the ground (upland and wetland), are very aggressive, and are common. You seldom see the nest before you are getting swarmed – run.
  - Bald faced hornets – make large, closed, paper nests. They are less common than German yellow jackets and you stand some chance of seeing their nest before you get too close, but their nests can be very low and hidden in the vegetation – run.
- **Mosquitoes** – cover up. Deer flies (late-June to mid-August) – wear a hat.
- **Ticks** – we have few, they are uncommon but increasing – Use repellent, cover up, tuck your pants, check yourself. The small numbers of ticks we have include both wood and deer ticks. Deer ticks can carry Lyme disease. If you find an embedded tick, educate yourself about Lyme disease and its symptom.
- **Snakes** – we have no poisonous snakes and only one snake that can bite and cause injury. Northern water snake (*Nerodia sipedon*) is found in Mud Lake, but it is uncommon. If a snake swims aggressively toward you in the water, avoid it.
- **Skunks, raccoons, and opossums can carry rabies and/or distemper.** Skunks are the greatest risk because they live a long time after they are infected with rabies. If you see a skunk (or any of these animals) active during the day, give it a wide berth. Do not touch bats.
- **Power equipment** – Know your equipment. For example, do not use a chain saw or brush cutter unless you are thoroughly trained.
- **Know whether it is hunting season, especially deer gun season** – wear a blaze orange vest, available from the Field Station. Hunting is allowed in the Cedarburg Bog, but not allowed on University land. However, all the land surrounding the Field Station is hunted.
- There are many **dead standing trees** in the Field Station forest that have been killed by Emerald Ash Borer and other natural causes. Whole trees and parts of trees fall in windy conditions. Avoid working in the woods when it is excessively windy. Be very alert to the sound of breaking or falling trees.

This list of “Risks and Precautions” obviously does not cover issues related to working with animals. It is assumed that you are trained to work safely with the animals you might observe or handle. An approved Animal Care and Use Protocol is required for all research on vertebrate animals.

This list also does not include standard things such as avoid getting sunburned, dress appropriately for the weather, always stay appropriately hydrated and do not eat anything that you cannot identify, etc.

***\*Send completed report to the Worker’s Compensation Coordinator within 24 hours after being notified of a work-related injury or illness. For questions related to worker’s compensation, please contact the Central Human Resources office at (414) 229-4463.***

- **Resources:**

**Poison Plants:** More information about poison plants, including photos, can be found at: <http://poisonivy.aesir.com/>.

**Hantavirus:** The CDC has detailed information about Hantavirus available at <https://www.cdc.gov/hantavirus/>

**Lyme Disease:** The American Lyme Disease Foundation provides information about the disease at <http://www.aldf.com/>.