

Guidelines for Field Research During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The intent of these guidelines is to minimize the risk of COVID-19 disease transmission and protect the health and safety of personnel conducting research activities at field sites. Failure to follow the approved protocol may result in suspension of field research. These guidelines are not intended to be sufficient to cover human subjects research.

Collaborative field research across multiple institutions hosted by UWM are governed by the most restrictive policies. UWM researchers must follow these guidelines at minimum.

No work can begin until (a) a Field Research Operation Plan has been prepared by the Research Group Leader and (b) the field research has been approved by the Department Chair and Dean. The Field Research Operation Plan should describe any deviations from these guidelines and detail any additional safety measures are being followed.

1. Field Research Operation Plans must include:
 - a. Name of lead investigator, project title, and funding source.
 - b. Justification as to why delaying the research will have a detrimental impact on the research project or on the progression of a degree by a student who is engaged in the research.
 - c. List of all personnel, their contact information, and an emergency contact.
 - d. Description of the research activities and the precautions undertaken to limit potential disease transmission (i.e., personal protective equipment, social distancing).
 - e. Any deviations from these guidelines or additional safety measures that will be implemented.
 - f. Contingency plan for carrying on research if one or more personnel becomes sick or is no longer willing to risk conducting the research.
 - g. List of any field samples that will require immediate lab storage, processing and/or analysis.
2. The approved Field Research Operation Plan must be reviewed by all participants in the research. All participants must acknowledge in writing or email that they understand the protocols, and the lead investigator will retain the acknowledgements.
3. Faculty, students, and staff must not be compelled to engage in travel or lab activities if they are not comfortable with participating in the activity. However, to the extent such activities constitute part of their job duties, this may result in loss of salary if sufficient substitute duties cannot be assigned.
4. The lead researcher will inform their staff that they have the right to refuse to engage in activities that could expose them to the public and obtain positive consent of their willingness to assume the risks involved.
5. When working off-site, researchers must follow all local or state travel restrictions. If the field location is not a UW-Milwaukee site, the lead researcher will need to obtain travel and risk management approval using [this form](#).
6. No one should participate in any field work if they have any symptoms consistent with the current COVID pandemic (see the [CDC website](#)).

7. No more than two people may occupy a vehicle to, from, and at the work site. Masks (i.e., cloth face coverings) are to be worn in vehicles when there are two people who are not from the same household. High-touch areas (i.e., truck keys, door handles, and steering wheel) must be disinfected before and after the field day.
8. If boats are to be used, the safety plan for each boat will specify the maximum number of total personnel allowed on the vessel at any time.
9. While traveling, the research team members should follow the [CDC guidelines](#) and [State of Wisconsin recommendations](#) regarding travel. During field tasks, individuals are required to wear masks when conducting tasks that require interacting with others less than six feet away.
10. All members of the research team should bring ample water/liquids and food for themselves in clearly labeled bottles and containers. Sharing drinks or food is not allowed.
11. Upon the completion of the field research all equipment must be disinfected.
12. If the field work requires lodging and/or long-term stays:
 - a. Individuals planning to participate in remote work should take [steps to avoid illness](#) much as possible before traveling to the remote site.
 - b. If possible, the individual should have separate rooms unless they are from the same household.
 - c. The purchase of food and supplies and contact with society outside the field crew should be limited to as few individual interactions as possible.
13. If a member of the field crew presents COVID-19 symptoms, the following steps are required:
 - a. The individual must cease field work and follow [State of Wisconsin guidelines for self-isolation](#). Contingency funds for a separate hotel room or other measures must be considered by the lead investigator before research begins.
 - b. The individual must contact their health provider as soon as possible for further instructions.
 - c. The date an individual can return to work is subject to the public health guidelines at that time. These guidelines are changing frequently and thus a delay of several weeks after the symptoms cease may be required.
14. If any member of the field party had close contact with an individual diagnosed with COVID-19, they should follow the [State of Wisconsin recommendations](#) for limited self-quarantine and self-monitoring.
15. For day research using small boats launched directly from the School of Freshwater Sciences to conduct sampling on the waters of Lake Michigan and the surrounding rivers, research team members should follow the CDC guidelines. During field tasks, individuals are required to wear masks when conducting tasks that require interacting with others less than six feet away.