

## University of Montana COVID-19 Guidelines for Off-campus Field Research

**REVISED April 27, 2021**

The Office of Research and Creative Scholarship (ORCS) proposes the following guidelines, dynamically updated with changing conditions, for **off-campus field studies** conducted by University of Montana researchers.

- **NOTE: Before travel the PI should check current restrictions and guidelines as provided by the CDC, county/city, and the Governor's office of Montana and any other state where the field work is conducted, and the external funding agency.**

### I. Prior to Travel:

A) All relevant trainings and permissions (e.g., IACUC, first aid, trapping permits, consent from landowners, Institutional Review Board, etc.) must be in place before initiating any travel to field sites.

B) The PI should provide appropriate safety equipment to the crew. This includes face masks appropriate to the project as determined by local and national guidelines, and the expected closeness of interaction and potential contagion within the field crew and between the field crew and others.

Also, if the field crew member does not have their own thermometer, the PI should provide one for the crew member to use as part of their 24-hour personal health check while in the field (see IVA).

C) Before departure, each person going to the field should self assess their health, and be symptom free (including no contact with anyone symptomatic and/or tested as Covid-19 positive in the past 24 hours).

D) Before departure, the field crew supervisor should review with the PI a written contingency plan in case someone becomes symptomatic for COVID-19. At a minimum, it should include the following:

- nearest clinic to the field location that will run COVID tests, with phone #s, hours of operation, etc.
- reliable means of communicating this to PI/ UM (InReach, etc.), with phone #s, etc.
- plan if the clinic refuses to run tests on a person that is not feeling well (this is fairly common right now). This would probably include isolation and a call to the PI
- back-up plan to "evacuate" field crew in the event that they test positive or become debilitated and are unable to care for themselves
- basic first aid kit with things like Tylenol for fevers
- Communicate this document to each individual and make it easily accessible.

E) Field crews should follow local, regional and federal guidelines for quarantines. Currently, no quarantine is required for UM Research Personnel returning from out of state back to Montana.

### II. Vehicles:

To the extent practicable, reduce the number of passengers traveling in each field research vehicle. Within each vehicle, place as much distance between occupants as possible. The UM mask mandate, in accord with MCCHD directives and CDC recommendations, extends to university-owned vehicles and vehicles used to further UM academic and research operations.

### III. Lodging During Field Research

*Every effort should be made to provide individual living arrangements for field researchers.*

A) The PI is responsible for providing all necessary disinfectant and sanitation supplies including gloves, masks, cleaners, etc.

B) Social spacing (>6 feet) must be enforced at all times during field research. This includes sleeping arrangements, cooking arrangements, and other activities. Other precautions include:

- General Hygiene: Wash hands often. If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands. Cover all sneezes/coughs with a tissue or with your shirt sleeve.
- General disinfecting guidelines: Use disinfectant wipes on surfaces used by multiple team members. As a substitute: a spray bottle diluted household bleach solution (4 teaspoons bleach per quart of water) or alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol. **Never mix household bleach with ammonia or any other cleanser.**
- Sleeping: everyone will have their own personal sleeping space.
- Bathrooms: Take all personal items (towels, hand towels, shampoo/conditioner) with you and leave them in your personal space. Do not leave them in the bathroom.

### IV Daily Health Self-Check:

A) Every day each crew member must fill in the “[Employee 24-Hour Self-Check Form](#),” measuring their own temperature and recording any potential symptoms of COVID-19 (the Check-in form lists current potential symptoms from CDC). This form will be kept private by the individual crew member and will provide an important record for medical treatment if the need arises. This requirement does not apply to fully vaccinated crew members (see section V below for more on vaccination contingencies).

### V. Mitigating Circumstances Based on Self-Identified Vaccinations

NO student or employee shall be forced to disclose whether they have been vaccinated, or be forced to be vaccinated before the travel. However, in some cases personnel may self-volunteer that they have been fully vaccinated. (Note: “Fully vaccinated” means that all required vaccinations were completed at least 2 weeks before travel commences). In such cases the following applies (as per current [updated CDC guidelines](#)):

- If the research group contains 2 or more personnel who did *not* self-identify as fully vaccinated, all of the rules above will apply as described above.
- If *the entire research group* self-volunteers that they have been fully vaccinated, requirements above related to vehicle, lodging, and daily health self-check can be relaxed.
- If all but one in the research group self volunteers as fully vaccinated, the group can relax requirements for vehicle, lodging, and daily health self-check as if they are an entirely vaccinated group (as per CDC guidelines re gathering with “unvaccinated people from one other household”).

- Vaccinated individuals should, as much as possible, stay within their 'pod' and try to minimize interactions with others. When outside the pod, even vaccinated people should follow all masking, hygiene and social distancing precautions.