



Environmental Health and Safety, Guidance Document

Title: Field Research Project Safety & Security

Section: SHERM

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This information is intended for those that conduct sponsored field research activities.

Many research projects at UTHealth Houston involve off-campus field activities which may present personnel with unique hazards not necessarily encountered when conducting laboratory based research. Potential field research risks that might be encountered include, but are not limited to:

- x Physical and Environmental Hazards
- x Personal safety
- x Transportation (e.g. driving)
- x Animal and Pest Hazards
- x Infectious Diseases

This document is intended to serve as a guide to assist in the recognition of the potential risks associated with field work, and to summarize the best-practice steps that can be considered to minimize or eliminate risks through planning and preparation. This information is intended to be applied to field work in remote settings, but much of it is applicable to community-based field work as well. If conducting a research project in an urban or community-based setting, refer to the Community-Based Education & Research Project Safety & Security Guidance Document.

Project Risk Assessment

All research projects conducted must undergo a project risk assessment. The project risk assessment should be submitted to the Environmental Health & Safety (EHS) for review. This process is intended to identify the anticipated and potential project specific hazards and risks. From this, “go” and “no-go” criteria specific to your research project can be established and hazards encountered during field work can be effectively managed. The subsequent controls necessary to protect the health and safety of the staff and students involved are documented and agreed upon through the review process. This information is then communicated to all field research participants and any necessary institutional stakeholders, such as the host department and the occupational health program.

For your convenience, a Field Research Project Safety Plan and Risk Assessment form designed specifically for field research activities has been developed by EHS. This form is intended to stimulate investigators to identify the risks and hazards to be encountered in the field and subsequent controls to be implemented. Location-specific points of contact and emergency plans must be developed. If any laboratory work will be conducted to

complement the field research activities, please include a description of the laboratory based work associated with the field studies on this form.

The Field Research Project Safety & Security and Risk Assessment form and more information about the submission process may be found on the [EHS website](#)

and on the [EHS website](#)

made in advance with local facilities for emergency medical treatment. Please ensure this is completed before travel.

First aid kits are essential for all off-campus activities. Each department or field research team is responsible for purchasing and maintaining first aid kits, ensuring that the appropriate location specific components are included in the kits. Contact the Occupational Health Program for advice on the contents of a first aid kit and to arrange a first aid training course.

All animal bites, scratches, mucous membrane exposures, or injuries that break the skin and are likely to be contaminated are to be treated as exposures. Perform first aid procedures immediately and notify your field supervisor. If you are ill with fever or other symptoms of an infection and you also have animal contact, let the first aid provider or local physician know that you have been exposed to animals in the field. Report any unusual or lengthy illnesses to the first aider, local physician, or occupational health physician if you have returned to UTHHealth. Any bites, scratches, mucous membrane exposures, or other injuries or illnesses sustained in the field must be reported to through the [Supervisors First Report of Injury form](#). This important reporting mechanism is utilized to ensure proper medical treatment and follow up is performed, if necessary, and provides the documentation needed for reimbursement claims submitted through insurance.

Emergency Plans

You should develop detailed emergency situation plans for each field research location to be visited, including considerations for evacuation, communication, nearest hospital locations and contacts. In addition, consider the following points in your emergency plan:

- x Designate an individual in the field research team to be the responsible first aid provider. Have at least one back up or designate several first aid providers if multiple field study locations will be visited simultaneously which are geographically separated. First aid providers should be trained in first aid, CPR/AED and addressing field emergencies – contact the [UTHealth Houston Recreation Center](#) for more information on this training.
- x Understand if any field research team members have any medical predispositions that should be considered for field emergency preparedness (e.g. asthma, allergies, etc.).
- x Ensure all staff and student participants have obtained the necessary travel insurance coverage, inclusive

For field research involving animals, training must be obtained on the proper handling and management techniques for the species to be encountered.

If You Have a Chronic illness

If you are being treated for a chronic illness, be sure to notify the occupational health physician before you have animal contact. Diseases that lower your immunity, such as HIV infection and cancer, as well as drugs that lower immunity, like prednisone, may put you at increased risk of contracting a zoonotic infection. Exposures to certain animal species may be unsafe for you.

Diseases Transmitted from Animals to Humans

Humans do not usually “catch” infectious diseases that affect animals. However, there are so.1 T9 (ev)-8 p0((y)16 (pMC /P <

What you should not do

- x Do not carry fire arms or other offensive tools. These tools require special training and may be subject to certain legal requirements.
- x Do not consume alcohol before or during field work.
- x Do not carry large amounts of cash or valuables on your person or vehicle.
- x If cash gifts, cash equivalents, or gift certificates are required for compensation for participating in research only carry the minimum amount to complete the study in the time allotted for the visit.
- x Do not carry cash gifts, cash equivalents, or gift certificates required for field research in a manner that can be seen by the public. Cover in an envelope prior to delivery.

Tips for Field Research Projects in Remote and/or Wilderness Areas:

Before the trip

- x Map out the route with Google maps or another resource.
- x Carry local contact information and local police and EMS contact info.
- x Leave copies of safety plan and itinerary with a colleague in your department or school.
- x If meeting with someone, call them prior to departure to verify:
 - o The correct address
 - o There will be someone there to meet you
 - o Correct mapping (39.12.0 (her)-1800 (T) 3(x)-1.1 (h s)-8 ((her)-001))TJ 0 Tc 0 Tw 39.012 0-124

Additional Resources

US National Park Service (NPS) - Wildlife and Outdoor Hazards in Parks

<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/healthandsafety/outdoor-hazards.htm>

American Veterinary Medical Association - Disease Precautions for Hunters

<https://www.avma.org/public/Health/Pages/Disease-Precautions-for-Hunters.aspx>

Weather and Extreme Environmental Conditions

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration - Weather

<http://www.noaa.gov/weather>

Electronic Library of Construction Occupational Safety & Health - Lightning

http://www.elcosh.org/document/2250/d000149/Lightning%2BSafety.html?show_text=1

NIOSH - Cold Stress

<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/coldstress/>

NIOSH - Heat Stress

<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/heatstress/default.html>

Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) - Heat Safety Tool (Android and iPhone app)