



STEM Working Group proposal: Field Research Mitigation Plan

The objective of this Field Risk Mitigation Plan form is to expand high priority field research quickly with minimal risk during Phase 1. Phase 2, and any later phases, will be used to increase field-related research activities toward 100% while maintaining best practices for COVID mitigation. Mutual cooperation and strict adherence to safety protocol are essential for maintaining health and safety.

Instructions: Each research group participating in field research is required to complete and receive approval for a Phase 1 Field Risk Mitigation Plan using the template form below. For items 1 through 7 below, mark only the boxes your research group will adhere to as part of your Field Risk Mitigation Plan. Boxes marked with an “X” in the template are minimum requirements applicable to the vast majority of cases. PIs who cannot comply with one of these minimal requirement boxes shall provide written explanation and description of alternative control(s) that will be implemented.

This completed form shall be submitted to <name of department chair or designee> for approval. Only after that time is field work permitted.

- 1. Laboratory Personnel.** Please list the numbers of personnel in your group (including yourself) who will conduct off-campus research activities; this number should represent the maximum number of personnel conducting off-site activity during Phase 1.

Personnel Class	Individuals Performing Field Working During Phase 1
Faculty	
Staff	
Post-doctoral fellows & Research Associates	
Graduate students	
Undergraduate students	0
Other	0
Total Lab Personnel	

- 2. Planning checklist for off-campus, field research.** Prior to conducting field research, the PI shall plan for COVID-related personnel safety for off-campus locations, including planning for healthcare contingencies prior to departure. Planning and prep work must be done remotely when feasible and PIs shall adhere to the following general guidelines: a) Limit time in the field to critical activities, b) take into consideration local, domestic, and international restrictions at field sites, and c) all prioritize field research with the ability to maintain physical distance during travel and at field sites. Updates on travel advisories for the U.S. and international travel are provided by the [CDC](#), [Department of State](#), and [Pitt’s Global Operations Support](#). In addition to these guidelines, the Phase One Field Risk Mitigation Plan will include the following:

- Phase 1 field research personnel shall have a low risk of recent COVID exposure based on a good-faith examination of contact and travel history. This is relevant to field work that spans multiple days and/or wherein strict social distancing will likely not be maintained at all times due to the nature of the planned work. Examples of activities that elevate risk of COVID exposure include caring for COVID positive patient, exposure to an individual in a high COVID-risk profession, identification of probable recent COVID exposure through contact tracing of an individual who is COVID positive or likely to be COVID positive, or travel to locations with case numbers exceeding 50/100,000 persons. **(mandatory)**
- Acquire PPE equipment to enable adherence to CDC guidelines by researchers at all times. This shall include gloves and disinfectants. Cloth masks are acceptable for most cases, although wearing of surgical or N95 masks should be considered for risk mitigation for work where strict social distancing cannot be maintained (i.e. due to need to occupy the same vehicle or marine vessel as other personnel). Thermometers shall be provided for symptom monitoring. **(mandatory)**
- Plan for healthcare contingencies. Determine location of nearest emergency room or other medical facilities closest to your field research location. Document whether the field site is accessible by a land-based ambulance or if air ambulance would be required.
- If you are visiting a site with an existing COVID risk mitigation plan (i.e. implemented by a company or owner of a site), obtain a copy of the plan and the PI shall ensure compatibility with Pitt's research recovery plan.
- <describe other field safety planning protocols here>

3. Plan for COVID-related field research safety. Mark boxes below for mitigation measures that field researchers will employ to minimize COVID risk:

- Ensure physical distancing at all times and in all spaces according to most recent guidance if possible. This guidance requires at least 6ft. per person and 1 person per 150 sq feet for extended occupancy of working areas. When strict social distancing cannot be maintained, researchers shall consider wearing surgical or N95 masks for risk mitigation. If this is not possible at all times, describe risk mitigation measures in the "other protocols" tab, below. **(mandatory)**
- Encourage symptom checklist monitoring for all researchers working in the field. Researchers shall not engage in off-campus field work or interact with other researchers if they have an elevated temperature and/or COVID/Flu-like symptoms. **(mandatory)**
- All personnel engaging in field research activities are required to wear face coverings. Researchers are also strongly encouraged to also wear them in public settings (on campus or in field), as per CDC guidance. This applies to outdoor, as well as indoor spaces. **(mandatory)**
- Thorough hand washing or sanitization must occur upon entry and exit of field workspaces. **(mandatory)**
- Personnel will maintain a detailed personal record of all personal interactions while off-campus, highlighting any interactions wherein social distancing requirements were violated for greater than several minutes. This daily log of contacts will enable tracing in case of infection. **(mandatory)**
- Disinfect all handled equipment or tools before and after use by each researcher.

- Provide researchers with personal toolkits in order to avoid the need for sharing of commonly used tools or equipment.
- Researchers will be housed at field research sites in such a way that no one will need to share a bedroom, bathroom or kitchen space. Researchers bringing families or researchers who were cohabiting for 14 days or more prior to arriving at field location are exempt from this requirement. If this is not possible, describe risk mitigation steps in the “other protocols” tab, below.
- Avoid unnecessary congregating in common areas (hotel dining areas, gyms, laundry facilities). If necessary, follow CDC best practices for mitigating possible exposure that may include staggering or scheduling activities.
- Request that accommodation/housing units are thoroughly cleaned and disinfected between residents' stays.
- <describe other protocols for maintaining COVID-related safety in the field>

4. COVID-19 response. In addition to the prescribed University response protocols, please indicate how your working group will respond if a member shows COVID-19 symptoms. This is relevant for field research that spans multiple days. Mark boxes that apply to your planned Phase One Field Risk Mitigation plan.

- Name of symptomatic or potentially infected individual will be reported immediately to <name of department chair or designee> (**mandatory**)
- Infected lab members will self-quarantine as required by the EOC (<https://www.emergency.pitt.edu/>) and not return to campus until they have been medically cleared. (**mandatory**)
- Individuals who worked directly with the potentially infected person will quarantine as required by the EOC. (**mandatory**)
- Researchers conducting field research should return to their permanent residence if possible.
- If a person sick with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 and that person is unable to return to their permanent residence, they and anyone sharing the same housing with them who is also unable to leave (e.g., a family member or co-worker) may remain at a field location in quarantine but must remain in their housing until medically cleared to leave.
- Pitt researchers will check in with the sick person (remotely if at all possible) and help them obtain groceries and needed medical supplies until they are recovered enough to return to their permanent residence.
- Anyone needing transportation to a hospital will need to call 911 for an ambulance.
- <describe other protocols here if COVID symptoms emerge while in the field>

5. Plan for return to campus. Prior to returning to campus, field researchers will follow the mitigation measures marked below:

- Encourage symptom checklist monitoring for all researchers returning from working in the field. Researchers should not come to campus or interact with other employees if sick. (**mandatory**)

- Disinfect all handled equipment or tools brought from the field before returning to campus. (**mandatory**)
- <describe other protocols here for return to campus>

6. Reporting plan. To be most effective, this mitigation plan must be agile and adaptable. If you experience challenges or have concerns with your own field research plan or observe difficulties from others which potentially impact the health and safety of your group members, you should report it.

- Issues will be reported to <name of department chair or designee> (**mandatory**)
- If a satisfactory response is not received within 24 hours, issue will be reported to <Higher-level leader or ombudsman> (**mandatory**)

7. Equity. Field research mitigation plans need to be implemented fairly to provide access to all researchers.

- Participation in field research during Phase 1 off-campus is voluntary (**mandatory**)
- Field work plans and scheduling under Phase 1 will be reviewed by all researchers and approved by the PI. (**mandatory**)
- If possible, reasonable accommodation will be provided for "at-risk" researchers.
- <describe additional efforts here>