Supervisors - Preparing for fieldwork checklist

This safety plan checklist is intended to be used as a guide for supervisors who will be coordinating fieldwork or field trips for students, faculty, staff, alumni, visitors, etc. It is set up as a timeline progression, beginning with section A that contains safety procedures that must be completed but can be scheduled to accommodate different schedules throughout the calendar year. Section B includes a checklist of items that must be completed before departing for a field expedition, and Section C includes safety items that should be completed while in the field. Items highlighted in yellow are documents that our DEI committees will be working on developing.

A. General Safety Procedures that can be completed at any time

1. Know who manages the field site(s) or who owns the property of the location you wish to conduct research. Obtain written permission from the field site director or landowners prior to visiting any sites.

2. Self-educate on the experience of your team member’s identity, and the corresponding risk that they may encounter in the field. This does not involve asking researchers to relive trauma surrounding their identity as a source of education. Rather, use available resources to self-educate (some resources are provided below in the resources section). Remember that some identities are not visible, therefore supervisors should self-educate on the risks that different marginalized identities face. Furthermore, self-educate on the politics, demographics, and culture of the areas surrounding established field site(s), in order to be fully aware of potential risks.

3. The scale of risk can be higher at international field sites (e.g., identities may be criminalized). At minimum, be aware of and abide by any international laws and customs in addition to local foreign laws, current political situations, actual degree of law enforcement, and mandate a conversation between researcher and supervisor to establish an emergency contingency plan.

4. Contact others that have previously used or worked in this field site location to identify any areas that have a history of risk. Document all known cases of risk (physical, mental, emotional, or otherwise) at that location, submit to your department’s director/chair, and share it with any team members who will be working at the site so they can prepare accordingly.

5. Provide training opportunities to increase field safety and promote awareness for your field work participants. Examples of training topics are suggested below. Additionally,
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**Resource list** of where some of these trainings are available locally or virtually are provided at the end of this document.

a. Self-defense course  
b. First aid/CPR  
c. Wilderness training  
d. Bystander Intervention  
e. Cultural history course about the location of the field site

**B. Safety checklist to complete before departing for field work**

1. Complete all required departmental paperwork and travel authorizations.

2. Always carry credentials in case someone challenges why you are at the field site. These include photo ID (driver’s license, passports, institution ID), and relevant permits.

3. Obtain an official letter of support from the supervisor, director, and/or department chair for researchers doing fieldwork with contact information. This provides additional credibility to the researcher, if/when they are approached and challenged.

4. Provide all participants with the official letter of support, as well as identification that clearly demonstrates affiliation with the research institution (i.e., University apparel, institution bumper stickers/car magnets, business cards, etc.). Additionally, ensure all participants have any other safety materials required such as safety vests, helmets, handheld radios, other equipment, etc.

5. Complete a field risk management plan that discusses risk at established field sites. This document should detail potential risks and identify mitigation(s) for that risk. This document should also act as a living document for recording safety incidents. Copies of these should be carried with fieldworkers on their person as well as left in the workplace/lab.

6. Ensure field course locations and housing are appropriate, safe, and equitable for all identities. Do not assume people will be comfortable with shared housing on the basis of gender. Identify on the field risk management plan how you will solicit regular, anonymized feedback from field participants to determine the climate and safety of field sites and accommodations and engage supervisors in responding to this feedback.

7. Create a time and space to talk with all participants about the risks, preparations to minimize risk, reporting mechanisms, and fieldwork safety concerns well in advance of the field work start date. Be aware that the conversation will likely be difficult and will require mental and emotional readiness by both parties. Provide all participants with a copy of the *Guidelines for Reporting While in the Field* handout.
8. Even after education, supervisors that do not share the same identity as their participants will be unaware of all potential risk to researchers. If participants bring up potential or experienced risk, validate their experiences and assist in modifying the project so that they can safely continue conducting research while eliminating or minimizing risk.

9. If working at an established field station, show new participants the established field locations, teach them about the specific concerns of that field location, and inform them of the resources in accordance with established safety plans. The resources should have contact information about field site personnel relevant to research and safety (e.g., contact information of the local police department).

10. If **not** working at an established field station, assist participants in establishing safe housing accommodations before arriving at the field location. A safe and secure housing location includes the following: researchers can secure food, safe travel to and from field sites, and supportive points of contact in the local community. If camping at the field location, provide a checklist of required materials that participants must bring in order to have secure access to food and the ability to contact for help if needed.

11. Review and agree upon fieldwork and safety plans with the participants before any fieldwork begins.

C. **Safety checklist to use while in the field**

1. Introduce yourself and your team to the property owners and neighbors surrounding the field property, or leave a short note informing neighbors about research being conducted at nearby locations and who will be conducting the research. It is advisable to also include contact information, preferably information that clearly demonstrates affiliation with the research institution to provide additional credibility.

2. Actively engage with participants on how to reorganize fieldwork practices if/when there are restrictions on movement; for example, local ordinances limiting activity (i.e., curfew, stay-at-home orders, etc.).

3. Actively solicit regular, anonymized feedback from field participants to determine the climate and safety of field sites and accommodations and engage supervisors in responding to this feedback.

4. Review and discuss the safety plan, field management risk plan, and guidelines for reporting at least once during the extent of the field work.
I. **Participants – Safety in the Field Checklist**

This safety plan checklist is intended to be used as a guide for any participants who will be participating in fieldwork or field trips, which includes students, faculty, staff, alumni, visitors, etc.

1. Review the *field risk management plan* before you leave to complete fieldwork. Talk to your supervisor in advance if there any additional accommodations needed or if you have questions.

2. If at any time you feel unsafe about the field site location or the work required, you should contact your supervisor to discuss ways to modify the project. While supervisors work closely with researchers, they often do so outside of the field site, and therefore may not know of the risks and dangers therein encountered. It is paramount that at-risk individuals advocate for themselves.

3. Attend any training opportunities provided by your supervisor or institution. Examples include:
   a. Self-defense course
   b. First aid/CPR
   c. Wilderness training
   d. Bystander Intervention
   e. Cultural history course about the location of the field site

4. Ask for a copy of the letter of support for the proposed field work, as well as identification that clearly demonstrates affiliation with the research institution (i.e., University apparel, institution bumper stickers/car magnets, business cards, etc.). Wearing official-looking gear (hard-hat, safety vest, etc.) provides credibility at a distance.

5. Always carry credentials in case someone challenges why you are at the field site. These include photo ID (driver’s license, passports, institution ID), and relevant permits.

6. Engage in fieldwork with another person, when possible. Always have two points of contact (preferably a supervisor) who is aware of your whereabouts and expected schedule on a given day. A written communication plan that gives notice of field plans is another way to maintain communication with a point of contact.

*In the event that an at-risk individual’s supervisor is unwilling to help minimize risk, the individual should leverage available resources at their institution, such as:*
1. Have a support group for 1) reporting and documenting risk and 2) gathering witnesses to help showcase the level of threat. The support group might range from peers, a counselor, to established institutional services.

2. Report the risk and the supervisor, following the institution’s established reporting policy or office (see Guidelines for Reporting While in the Field). This report can include documentation of the risk (for example, recordings of a verbal altercation, written correspondence of an inactive supervisor, photo documentation of a slur, etc.).

3. Reach out to the departmental officer in charge of reporting situations to higher echelons of administration who would provide administrative and legal support for the researcher. There are laws in place to maintain the safety of researchers.
   - For KGS researchers, this would be Annette Delaney or Rolfe Mandel.
   - For KU Geology researchers, this would be Dave Fowle, Department Chair.