NAU SES URGE Pod: Safety Plan and Code of Conduct for Field Work

Safety Plan for Field Workers
*Modified from* Demery and Pipkin 2020 (doi:10.1038/s41559-020-01328-5)

**Actions for individual researchers to minimize risk to themselves:**

*Prior to field work*
1. Be aware of international laws and customs, current political climate, law enforcement in the field work location, and consider how these may pose safety risks
2. Contact others that have previously work at a field site to determine whether there is a history of risk; if so, gather constructive suggestions for how to mitigate these risks, and bring them to the attention of your supervisor
3. Talk with colleagues and supervisors about risks and reporting mechanisms. If a supervisor is dismissive, contact another mentor (someone else in the department, ombudsman, student disability services)
4. Participate in field safety and/or preparation classes such as first aid, cultural history classes, self-defense, etc.

*While conducting field work*
5. If possible, do not conduct field work alone. If alone, have a point of contact who knows your schedule well
6. Always carry credentials, such as university apparel, bumper stickers, a letter of support from your institution, etc.
7. Know who manages the field site and inform the field managers when and where you will be at those locations
8. Introduce yourself to neighbors near the field site or leave a note informing them about the research and your presence; contact information should include your institution
9. If at any time you feel unsafe, contact your supervisor to discuss project modification; be a self-advocate

**Actions for supervisors to support at-risk individuals:**

*Prior to field work*
10. Be aware of international laws and customs, current political climate, law enforcement in the field work location, and consider how these may pose safety risks to group members
11. Have open discussions in your research group about possible risks and safety procedures prior to field work; engaging with appropriate literature (e.g., Demery and Pipkin, 2020) can help with this
12. Develop a field risk management plan that is discussed with participants prior to field work and carried into the field. Provide participants with information about possible safety concerns *at least a few weeks before the trip*. This information should be informational and instructive, and include the following: how or why something poses a risk, how to prevent that risk, and how to address injury/unsafe conditions if/when they happen. Information should include weather & climate concerns, possible wildlife interactions, cultural concerns, and anything else particular to the field area. If there are
safety concerns that impact a specific group (i.e. prevalence of white supremacist groups, border patrols, laws against being LGBTQ), that information should be provided to all participants so all can be prepared, with the expectation that participants and leaders will support one another.

13. Develop an emergency contingency plan that is discussed with participants prior to field work and carried into the field.

14. Collect medical info (medications, allergies, etc.) that will be confidential unless necessary to share in an emergency (e.g., if a participant were unconscious and an EMT needed medical information).

15. Ensure housing/accommodations are appropriate, safe and equitable for all identities.

16. Educate your research group members / field work participants on the NAU SES Code of Conduct field guidelines (below).

While conducting field work

17. Enforce and uphold the NAU SES Code of Conduct field guidelines (below).

18. Encourage participants not to conduct field work alone.

19. Guide and/or assist participants in making introductions to field managers, neighbors, and others who may have questions about the field work.

20. Encourage participants to carry identification information and take other safety measures.

21. Be prepared to discuss obstacles to participants’ safety as they arise, and to modify plans if needed to accommodate participants’ safety.

Actions for SES and NAU to support at-risk individuals:

Prior to field work

22. Collect field itineraries (e.g., flights, locations), safety plans, and emergency information (e.g., emergency contact, medications) from researchers prior to departure.

23. Coordinate department- or university-level field safety and/or preparation trainings.

24. Establish department- or university-wide guidelines or a Code of Conduct for field work.

While conducting field work

25. Be prepared to respond to unexpected safety obstacles and to assist research teams in adapting their plans if needed.

*Example of detailed risk information from the McGill Field School handbook (Christie Rowe & TAs, 2019): Rattle snakes are abundant in our mapping areas. Do not approach snakes to take photos and do not under any circumstances do anything to bother a rattlesnake. Rattlesnake bites are rarely fatal but emergency medical attention is essential to prevent serious injury. Following simple guidelines can help you avoid unpleasant interactions with rattlesnakes. They are not active in the cold of the night or the peak heat of the day, when they will hide under cover. Never put your hand into any holes you can’t see into or reach up onto a ledge overhead where you can’t see. Protect your ankles and legs with boots, loose pants, gaiters. Don’t dig in wood piles or rock piles. Step on top of, not over, rocks and obstructions. If you see or hear a snake, back slowly away and point it out to other people in the area - they tend not to move very far. Keep your tent zipped when you are not inside. At night, pull socks over the tops of your hiking boots to keep out snakes and bugs. When walking at night, use a flashlight to illuminate the ground in front of you. In case of snake bite, keep the victim as calm as possible (do not run out to cars which would elevate heart rate) and keep the wound below the heart. Remove any tight jewelry and clothing near the bite area. Seek transportation to hospital immediately."

Field Code of Conduct

Excerpt from the existing NAU SES Code of Conduct (in progress)

Guiding Principles for Field Work

Work in the field can be isolating, dangerous, and/or stressful, and may present challenges and issues unique in comparison to other academic settings. Field work also does not include the usual “work” and “home” distinctions when living and working with peers and colleagues. In all field activities, we are therefore mindful of the additional rights of all participants, and shared values:

- All participants have the right to privacy when using the bathroom. In some field situations the use of indoor bathrooms is not possible and care must be taken to respect the privacy of participants outdoors;
- On overnight trips, all participants have the right to a private space (i.e. room or tent). Participants must respect the privacy of other peoples’ spaces, and not enter without permission nor disturb someone in their room/tent unnecessarily. If private space cannot be accommodated, all participants must agree to the circumstances;
- All participants have the right to rest if they are physically or mentally exhausted as long as doing so does not infringe on the safety or wellbeing of other participants;
- All participants have the right to refuse or to pause work if they have not been adequately trained or if equipment is not provided;
- All participants should respect the landscape where they are working including the land, water, plants, and animals, following “Leave No Trace” principles to the extent possible, while acknowledging permitted sampling necessarily alters the land;
- All participants should respect the cultures and communities of people that live on the land where they are working, including Indigenous and traditional knowledge holders, and should explicitly request permission to take photographs, audio recordings, and/or video recordings of people, or use their stories, ideas, and information;
- All participants should recognize and avoid overly aggressive or chauvinistic actions, and avoid promoting a culture where “roughing it” is seen as a rite of passage.

URGE pod suggested additions or changes to existing text (to bring to D&I committee)

Taken from or inspired by the McGill Field School handbook (Christie Rowe & TAs, 2019):

- Amendment to the right to rest principle: Take time to yourself when you need it - do so safely and inform somebody if you are going to leave line of sight/earshot. Be sensitive to others’ needs for quiet or personal time as well.
- Amendment to the right to privacy when using the bathroom principle: Participants should be given information on bathroom use and menstruation in the wilderness before the trip, with discussion on the importance of maintaining hydration in the field.
- When conducting field work as a group, or on a field trip, participants should do the following to encourage successful group work and a safe community environment:
  - Participants must treat themselves and one another with respect, patience, generosity, consideration, and forgiveness, while maintaining the values of
mutual support and cooperation that will help everyone succeed. Offer assistance and support when it is needed.

- Participants should encourage everyone’s learning (in terms of data collection, camping/outdoors skills, fitness, etc.).
- If a participant observes harassment, bullying, negative conduct, or another participant who is struggling, they should intervene if they are comfortable doing so, or seek support for the target in other ways (find someone who can help)
- Participants should contribute to camp tasks, such as doing dishes, cleaning up when moving camp, cleaning out vehicles, packing and unpacking the common equipment, etc. Enlist others to help or point out needed jobs.
- Participants should respect the camp schedule by setting an alarm (if needed), being ready to leave camp on time, honoring meeting times or pick ups, and returning to camp at the agreed time (or search parties will be organized)
- Participants must treat communal camp equipment with care, and report any damaged or worn equipment so that it can be repaired or replaced

- For participants’ physical safety, they should observe the following guidelines:
  - Participants should smoke only in designated areas. If smoking-related waste is not cleaned up, the activity may be prohibited. No smoking in vehicles or near where people are eating, sleeping, or cooking. Smoking is not allowed in the event of a fire ban
  - Participants may not use fireworks in camp
  - Participants should never walk around barefoot
  - Participants should not climb unsafe slopes or cliffs; instructors reserve the right to tell you what is unsafe even if you think you can handle it.
  - Participants should watch for people below while up high on a slope, and should not pass above or below others on a slope where rocks may be dislodged