MEAS Field Safety Guide

The purpose of this document is to identify codes of conduct, safety and reporting protocols, and identify possible challenges encountered during NCSU MEAS field programs (field trips, field courses, field work) and how to best prepare for and respond to these unique circumstances as well as outline expectations for participating in such programs.

- **Unique challenges of field programs (Modified From SERC)**
  - new, unfamiliar, unknown or nonstandard rules of conduct and reporting mechanisms;
  - reduced independence for access to transportation, food, medical resources, etc.;
  - distance from personal support networks at home;
  - unfamiliar cultural norms or language;
  - long days with physically strenuous work and exhaustion;
  - exposure to harsh environmental conditions and potential greater risk of environmental hazards, or unfamiliar risks compared to the home base location.

- **Code of Conduct**
  - **Personal Conduct**
    - **Harassment, bullying and discrimination** will NOT be tolerated on any level while participating in an NCSU MEAS field program. Please see reporting procedures below for options on how to respond to any violations of this key expectation.**

    I take full responsibility for my personal conduct and agree to abide by North Carolina State University regulations and Student Conduct Policies concerning firearms, alcohol, drugs/illegal substances, smoking, state/field course vehicles (if relevant), safety, and personal consideration of others. I further understand that North Carolina State University is committed to the principle of equal opportunity. It is the policy of North Carolina State University not to discriminate on the basis of race, sex, color, national origin, religion, disability, or sexual orientation with regard to its students, employees, or applicants for admission or employment. I understand that I am expected to treat others as I would like to be treated and any deviation from these expectations into harassment/bullying/unsafe behavior will not be tolerated and may result in being removed immediately from the field. I accept the responsibility to create an environment of mutual respect and to avoid situations that may cause suspicion of any unacceptable conduct. Throughout this field experience, I agree to cooperate with the director/staff/Primary Investigator of this program and to exhibit such demeanor as will reflect credit to North Carolina State University. I agree to look out for my classmates/team members and if I witness any bullying/harassment in the field I will either intervene directly if I feel safe to do so, or report said behavior to those in power (either in-field or designated trip external contact).
○ **Personal Health**

I agree to notify the lead director/primary investigator of any health or medical need or condition that may affect my participation in this field experience. I understand that I must make provision before departure for continuation of medical treatments such as prescriptions or special diets. I further agree to inform the lead director/primary investigator of any health or medical need or condition for which I desire assistance which develops after this date and prior to departure of the field experience. During the program, I will report any health or medical need that develops for which I desire assistance to the lead director/primary investigator. I also affirm that I am covered by medical insurance for the duration of the field experience. I agree that, in the event of illness or injury, the lead director/primary investigator is authorized to obtain emergency or other medical treatment as deemed necessary, including the administration of an anesthetic or other medication and surgery, and I hereby assume the cost of such treatment. I understand that this authorization is given in advance of any specific diagnosis, treatment, or hospital care being required, but it is given to provide authority and power on the part of the program to give specific consent to the diagnosis, treatment, or hospital care which, in the best judgment of a licensed physician, is deemed advisable.

○ **Personal Safety**

I understand that in the field there are additional safety hazards that one might encounter and am aware that my behavior in the field can impact not only my own safety but the safety of my team. The lead director/primary investigator is responsible for providing a detailed pre-trip safety meeting that identifies the possible hazards you may encounter at your field site and the safe practices you will use to minimize and potential risk. I understand that if at any point before or in the field, I have the right to speak up if I feel unsafe and request a stop work order and have a safety briefing from the lead director/primary investigator. I agree to look out for my classmates/team members and if I witness unsafe behavior I will either intervene directly if I feel safe to do so, or report said behavior to those in power (either in-field or designated trip external contact).

- **Reporting Procedures**
  - Communicate directly with PI if comfortable/safe to do so.
  - Communicate directly with designated offsite person of contact. Each trip should have a minimum of two designated offsite people to contact if issues arise in the field where someone does not feel comfortable addressing those issues with the people in power who are in the field. Need to provide phone and email details of designated offsite contacts to all field participants in advance of the trip. Need to ensure communication access for students/people in the field to ensure they can contact designated offsite contacts even in remote settings (satellite phones or frequent trips to email access should be established).
  - **Student Discipline Procedures** (undergraduate-focused). This regulation (and its appendices) set forth the procedures that apply when a Student is alleged to
have violated the Code of Student Conduct ("Code"). While the student conduct system at North Carolina State University ("NC State") does incorporate some principles associated with the legal system (e.g. due process), it is fundamentally an administrative review process and is not a court of law. Neither the Rules of Civil Procedure nor the Rules of Evidence apply. NC State’s responsibility is to provide a safe environment for all members of the university community, to educate Students about appropriate conduct, and to provide a fair hearing process.

- **Graduate Student Discipline Procedures**: This policy establishes procedures related to graduate student discipline.
- **Written Student Complaints**: The University has designated employees and resources to help maintain our professional standards across campus and to provide appropriate responses to our students’ complaints and concerns. This tool provides an interface with complaint categories to access specific reporting tools, which will bring your complaint or concern to the appropriate individual(s) or office(s) for resolution.
- **Howl For Help**: (Prevention resources, anonymously report concerns, etc.) The university encourages students to engage in responsible bystander behaviors. In cases of intoxication, overdose, and/or alcohol poisoning, the university’s primary concern is the health and safety of those involved. No student seeking medical treatment for an alcohol or other drug overdose will be charged with specific violations of the Code related to the possession and/or consumption of alcoholic beverages or drugs.
- **NCSU Cares Referral** (Report concerning behavior - can be for students who could cause harm or students who may be experiencing harm. Anonymous platform)
- **Also want to check for any additional reporting platforms for each trif for offsite work if conducting fieldwork as part of a larger program.**

- **Protecting At Risk Individuals**
  - All members of fieldwork/field experience must review the following document that outlines best practices for reducing field hazards for at-risk individuals, which shifts the burden of responsibility to those in power and bystanders in class.
  - “As a result of identity prejudice, certain individuals are at higher risk for conflict and violence when they are in the field. At-risk individuals include minority identities of the following: race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, gender identity, and/or religion. Everyone deserves to conduct fieldwork as safely as possible; therefore, it is paramount for anyone conducting fieldwork to be informed of the increased risk certain populations face when conducting field research and to define informed strategies. Research groups should adhere to best practices to minimize risk for all individuals who go into the field. Here we provide strategies that 1) acknowledge that some individuals encounter dangerous situations in the field due to their identity(ies), and 2) minimize the chance of conflict between and among researchers and other communities present at field sites. The inclusion of this document as a key resource in a
research lab, a university department, or any active research or work environment sends a positive signal to at-risk individuals that their professional community acknowledges their risk and is willing to implement actions to ensure their safety.” 

Demery and Pipkin, 2020, Safe Fieldwork Strategies for At-Risk Individuals

● Pre-field work safety planning
○ Identify local leaders
○ Check local laws
○ Determine if there is cell service
○ Include a minimum of 2 individual(s) not affiliated with the trip as a point of contact for issues that occur while in the field.
  ■ Potentially have one designated mandatory reporter and one non-mandatory reporter so person experiencing issues has options. Need to clearly communicate who is who and what the consequences of telling either individual are (automatically reported to higher power or possibility of discussing best course of action for individual that may not include an official report)
○ Pre-trip safety assessment
  ■ Create ‘living document’ that can be populated for specific field sites
    ● Local Hazards: weather, natural disasters, animals of concern
    ● Internet/phone reception access near field site?
    ● Identify local societa/political/cultural issues/norms that may threaten safety/comfort of participants
    ● Food/water access
    ● Permit needed?
    ● Local emergency contact list (including local search and rescue info)
● Safety Plans
  ○ Working in groups (minimum of 2 people)
    ■ If ‘using facilities’ stay within shouting/hearing distance of group
    ■ Each group has radio/walkie talkie?
    ■ Determine cell coverage
  ○ NC State branding visible (and permits on hand)
  ○ Principle Investigator on call
  ○ Identify local risks (animals, weather, etc)
● Emergency Contingency Plans
  ○ First Aid
  ○ Points of Contact within NC State (offsite / not in field)
  ○ Local Authorities
● Leave at least one copy of the safety plan behind with the department head or designated individual.
  ○ Discuss with Department Chair to designate physical location (maybe in main office) to keep records.
Crafting a Safety Plan for Field Trips

A key component of education and research within the Marine, Earth, and Atmospheric Sciences (MEAS) are field work and field trips. These experiences enrich the education of students by taking the educational environment out of the classroom and exposing students to the natural world. In addition, field work is often necessary to collect data. However, no field experience is without risks. A variety of complications may arise that jeopardize the safety of participants. Having a safety plan to mitigate these risks is essential to the well-being of the MEAS community.

Presented in the following pages are standard safety measures that every professor, teaching assistant, and/or principal investigator should plan to follow when in the field. In addition, you will be asked to identify risks and management strategies. This interactive document is meant to help educators think through the risk management of any field experience.

Due to the diverse nature of MEAS, this document cannot be, nor is it intended to be an exhaustive list of every possible risk that may be encountered in the field. As such, you are encouraged to develop a safety plan beyond the scope of this document.

Identifying yourself as researcher

1. What sort of safety gear will be worn by field participants? This may be orange vests to increase visibility, hard hats in case of falling debris, etc. It is recommended that the safety gear be standardized for all participants and contain NCSU branding so that participants can readily be identified.

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. Any additional form of identification that clearly demonstrates affiliation with the research institution can also be helpful (i.e., University apparel, institution bumper stickers/car magnets, etc.). How will you identify your coworkers and yourself?
3. Introduce yourself to the 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. **Have local residents been contacted prior to field work?**

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Local Risks

4. Research local flora and fauna at your field site. **Below, list wildlife that is potentially dangerous (i.e., venomous snakes, poison ivy, bears, etc) and how you would deal with them.**

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5. Research local physical hazards (i.e, tornados, quick sand, flash flooding) at your field site. **Below, list the physical hazards and strategies to avoid/deal with them (i.e, check weather forecast twice a day, plan evacuation routes, etc)**

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Emergency Preparedness

6. **Engage in field work with another person, whenever possible. If separated in the field, how will you communicate (i.e, two-way radios)?**

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7. Depending on the field site, emergency services (911 if in the United States) may not be reachable or readily available. If this is this case (i.e., if cell service is unavailable), how will you contact emergency services?

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8. Have a point of contact that is not in the field in case of emergency. Who is this person, and what is their contact information?

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