Natural Resources Research Institute

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA DULUTH
Driven to Discover

Safety Plan (Ideas) for NRRI, University of Minnesota

For consideration to be included in an NRRI Field Safety Plan
From Safe Fieldwork for At-Risk Individuals

Table 1. Strategies for Researchers, Supervisors, and Institutions to minimize risk
V. a. **What can researchers do to minimize risk to themselves on a field site?***
1. Talk with colleagues and supervisors about the risks, preparations to minimize risk, and reporting mechanisms. Be aware that the conversation will likely be difficult and will require mental and emotional readiness by both parties. If a supervisor is dismissive of this conversation, individuals should be informed that they can and should reach out to additional mentors, institutional or industry advocates (e.g., ombudsman, Equal Employment Opportunity officer, Diversity and Inclusion administrators, Student Disability Services, or other trusted professionals to have this conversation.
2. 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.
3. Contact others (especially those who share an at-risk identity) that have previously used a field site at a location where there is a history of risk. It is recommended that researchers document all known cases of risk at that location.
4. Take advantage of training opportunities to increase field safety and promote awareness (e.g., self-defense courses, first aid, safety aids, cultural history course about the location of the field site).
5. Know who manages the field site(s) and inform the field managers when/where you will be at those locations.
6. 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. It is advisable to also include contact information, preferably information that clearly demonstrates affiliation with the research institution to provide additional credibility.
7. Engage in fieldwork with another person, when possible. When this is not possible, have a point of contact (preferably the 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.

8. 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.).

9. If at any time you feel unsafe, 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.

What can supervisors do to support at-risk individuals?

1. 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. First-person accounts and resource compilations are available. 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.

2. Prior to fieldwork, contact relevant institutional offices for risk management on how to best manage risk in the field and identify resources for researchers to identify the social landscape in which the field site(s) is(are) situated and identify potential risks.

3. Create 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.

4. Provide materials to clearly identify researchers and their purpose (e.g., signs for vehicles and field sites, safety vests, etc.). These items should be provided for the researcher so that their use is easily implemented.

5. Have a conversation with all research team members on the risks and preparations to minimize risk. This can include a statement that certain demographics may be at higher risk, and that the supervisor is available to discuss with any researcher about concerns and proactive measures. Educational resources, such as this document should be made available to all researchers, who can then self-select to engage in a conversation about safety issues surrounding their specific identity(ies).

6. Create a time and space to talk to research team members specifically about fieldwork safety concerns in advance of the field season, and touch base with them throughout the season to address new concerns. As a reminder, this is an uncomfortable reality and merits the need to establish a space and time for both parties (researcher and supervisor) to be ready and willing to engage in this important discussion.

7. Even after education, supervisors that do not share the same identity as their researchers will be unaware of all potential risk to researchers. If researchers bring up potential or experienced risk, validate their experiences and assist in modifying the project so that they can safely continue conducting research.

8. The scale of risk can increase dramatically in an international field site. 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 with the researcher. Furthermore, this conversation should include allies in the field - collaborators/supervisors at the international field site - to discuss any safety concerns that the researcher may not be aware of.

9. At established field sites, introduce researchers (via email or in-person) to the manager of those locations, if they exist. If there are multiple managers, researchers should be introduced to each manager to minimize any miscommunication that could lead to increased risk.

10. When possible, show new researchers 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).

11. Assist researchers in establishing safe housing accommodations before arriving at the field location. A safe and secure housing location includes the following: researchers are able to secure food, safe travel to and from field sites, and supportive points of contact in the local community.

12. Review and agree upon fieldwork and safety plans with the researcher before any fieldwork begins.

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

What can departments and institutions do to support at-risk individuals?

1. Make a general field safety, harassment training and first aid course available and mandatory for all researchers to attend in the institution/department.

2. Make a list of resources available about diversity in the sciences, barriers to entry in the sciences and safety concerns.

3. Regularly reevaluate all current department and institutional practices to remove barriers to inclusion in safety practices. Develop a proactive plan to alter detrimental (anti-inclusion and equity) practices and document the process to increase transparency of decision-making.

4. Inform and advise supervisors and research groups about the benefits of acting responsibly and with care, as well as legal and social ramifications if they fail to invest in researcher safety during university-sanctioned fieldwork.

5. Provide training to supervisors on how to be an effective mentor to diverse individuals. This training should provide clear lines of communication for anyone conducting fieldwork, regardless of the researcher's institutional affiliation (e.g., a visiting researcher working with faculty and field sites managed by the institution).

6. Collate information on all active or newly established field sites throughout the year and provide this information to relevant police departments. Due to the sheer volume of field projects occurring at a single time, this cannot feasibly be accomplished by

supervisors and researchers. Supervisors or individual researchers should only have to contact specific law enforcement if the field site(s) was(were) not a part of this initial Package.

7. Supply an official letter of support for researchers doing fieldwork with contact information. This provides additional credibility to the researcher, if and when they are approached and challenged.

For consideration to be included in an NRRI Code of Conduct
From [Basin Research Group (via URGE) Code of Conduct](#)

Inclusivity and diversity

Enjoyable, high-quality research can only be conducted when you feel safe, secure, and supported. All group members are thus dedicated to a harassment-free experience for everyone, regardless of gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, body size, race, age, and/or religion. We do not tolerate harassment by and/or of members of our group in any form, and we ask all members of the community to conform to the following Code of Conduct:

- All communication, be it online or in person, should be appropriate for a professional audience, and be considerate of people from different cultural backgrounds. Sexual language and imagery is not appropriate at any time.
- Be kind to others and do not insult or put down other group members.
- Behave professionally. Remember that harassment and sexist, racist, or exclusionary jokes are not appropriate.
- Harassment includes offensive verbal comments related to gender, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, body size, race, religion, sexual images in public spaces, deliberate intimidation, stalking, following, harassing photography or recording, sustained disruption of discussions, inappropriate physical contact, and unwelcome sexual attention.
- Participants asked to stop any harassing behavior are expected to comply immediately.
- Contribute to discussions in meetings with a constructive, positive approach
- Be mindful of talking over others when discussing in groups, and be willing to hear out the ideas of others.

In addition to making group members feel safe and secure, diversity and inclusivity has numerous benefits to us all. Put simply, the greater the mix of people in our group, the greater the mix of skills, experiences, perspectives, and ideas we can collectively draw on. But the benefits of diversity and equality cannot be fully achieved without creating an inclusive environment.

Chris will discuss the Code of Conduct with lab members who violate these rules, no matter how much they contribute to the BRG, or how specialised or needed their skill set. If inappropriate behaviour persists after this initial discussion, formal processes, in line with Imperial College's work practise policies, will commence. To report an issue, please contact Chris Jackson; all communication will be treated as confidential. If you do not feel comfortable contacting Chris directly, please feel free to contact a member of the Postgraduate Research Committee (Saskia Goes, Sam Krevor, Rebecca Bell or Stephen Neethling).

Relevant links
UMN field research safety
https://dehs.umn.edu/field-research-safety
Field Safety Program Final

Pod Discussion Questions:

● Where is your work done? Are these spaces uncomfortable or unsafe for people of color?

● What training does your organization require or offer? How often? Do you find this training effective? What would you introduce to make it more effective?

- Will any of this kind of thing be covered in the field safety training on Thursday?
- Our subpod might not be qualified to completely write a field safety guide and code of conduct - need further help and buy in
- Do we already have something somewhere?

Notes from Pod Discussion:
Ensure rules are not made for one person
People's comfort in the field
Is it safe to call the police?
-Make sure everyone is wearing their lanyard
NRRI field days for undergrads and high school students
-doesn't have to be in the super wilderness
Vests would also help during hunting season
Coleraine has vests - but not in all sizes
Add to NRRI's core values
Talk to field workers for what makes them uncomfortable- Google form
Prepare some questions for field supervisors (awareness)
-Pull something together in the next couple of weeks instead of the next couple of days

Pod Members	Initials
Meagan Aliff	MNA
Steve Berger	SJB
Christopher Filstrup	
Megan Gorder	MDG
Cally Hunt	CRH
Kristofer Johnson	KTJ
Lucinda Johnson	
Brett Spigarelli	BPS
Tiffany Sprague	TAS
Rolf Weberg	
Holly Wellard Kelly	HAWK