

Department of Geosciences Field Safety Document

Introduction

Field work and field trips are critical to educating students in the geosciences. Firsthand experiential learning provides students with real world opportunities to understand fundamental geoscience processes and mechanisms. Because these opportunities often take place along road cuts, in wilderness areas, and on public lands, steps must be taken to mitigate risks and promote safe field practices. Risk mitigation and safe practices for several situations pertinent to field geology at the University of Arkansas are outlined below, and are applicable to both geology field camp and geology field trips.

General Concerns

- 1) Does the world know where you are?
 - A Notification of Travel Plans should be filed with the department indicating where and when the different aspects of the field trip/camp will take place. Provide a detailed schedule/itinerary letting people at the University of Arkansas and the University of Montana Western (for field camp) know where you will be each day.
- 2) Are your students adequately equipped?
 - Students should be prepared for extreme weather that will depend on field site. This involves dressing in layers, carrying a rain jacket, and carrying a backpack with a first aid kit and plenty of water, and food. Students must wear appropriate footwear, e.g., hiking boots with thick socks. Students in field camp will be trained and equipped with a hand held GPS unit. The student should also carry safety glasses or sunglasses for protection during rock sampling on the outcrop with a hammer. Students will be briefed about field safety prior to the beginning of fieldwork.
- 3) Is a student's relationship to the local culture potentially dangerous?
 - Some individuals encounter dangerous situations in the field because of their identity. It is important that the field group minimize chances of conflict in these situations. For example, field camps in Montana have reported gunfire in the vicinity of field sites, and aggressive people in bars after hours. To mitigate dangerous situations, a *risk assessment* will be performed as a group, and should consider all identities found in that group, with particular focus on racial, LGBTQ, international, and religious identities. Dangerous events of the past, current events, bystander intervention strategies, and procedures for documenting incidents in the field will be discussed as a group prior to at a field site. No individual may be forced into a field situation that they consider to be too dangerous. Failure to perform this risk assessment discussion may reported to the Department Chair.

- Bad experiences encountered by some individuals are the group's responsibility, and unsafe situations for some suggest that a field campaign or field camp is not adequately prepared. Reporting incidents can be done through the avenues outlined at the end of this document. The department's annual anonymous climate survey (administered in August each year) is also a helpful reporting mechanism.
- 4) Can you get help quickly in an emergency?
- Pertinent phone numbers for local hospitals, emergency medical services, the department, and the university should be available to access with a cell phone. The department also has an Iridium satellite phone that may be used when field activities occur in remote locations without adequate cellular service.
- 5) Are you ready for a medical emergency?
- Prior to the trip, all students should fill out a Field Trip Information Form which provides information regarding health insurance and an emergency contact. Allergies, current prescriptions, and existing medical conditions should also be noted on this form, and copies of the forms should be carried in each vehicle.
 - Whenever possible, faculty and teaching assistants should be trained in CPR and wilderness first aid. If all do not have the training, then at least some of the faculty and teaching assistants should have it and be prepared to use it in the field should the need arise. All faculty and teaching assistants should carry a first aid kit in the field. Field camp/trip staff should be prepared to make decisions regarding the evacuation of injured personnel and/or the need to call for help from local authorities versus driving the injured person into town to the local clinic or hospital.
- 6) Do your students know what to do in an emergency?
- Students must be briefed at the beginning of the field camp/trip about what to do in the case of an emergency. Students should always map in groups of 2 to 3 people. This allows at least one person to stabilize the injured person and leave to get additional help. In a group of 3, one individual can remain with the injured person while the third person can leave to get help from a faculty member or teaching assistant. One teaching assistant will stay with the vehicles each day to aid students who need transportation to the clinic or the hospital.
- 6) What is the policy regarding firearms?
- Firearms on University of Arkansas field trips. Handguns are only allowed on field trips to the extent specifically authorized by state law. Each individual who lawfully possesses a handgun and an enhanced carry permit is required to keep the handgun concealed from public view at all times and is responsible for carrying the handgun in a safe manner. If an individual carries a concealed handgun in a personal carrier such as a backpack, purse, or handbag, the carrier must remain within the individual's immediate vicinity (i.e., within arm's reach). During the field trip, you may be required to engage in activities that may require you to separate from your

belongings, and thus you should plan accordingly. Any student who violates the concealed carry laws while on the field trip or field camp may be subject to criminal prosecution and/or discipline by the University, up to and including dismissal. If you observe someone displaying a handgun or other weapon on the trip or during the camp, it should be reported to the faculty and the University of Arkansas Police Department.

- Firearms on University of Arkansas field camp at University of Montana Western. Firearms, including handguns, pellet/B.B. guns, paint ball guns, wrist rockets, sling shots, blow guns and any other self-propelling apparatus are not allowed in the residence halls at the University of Montana Western. By extension of this policy, this requires that no firearms be permitted while the student is participating in field camp, since it would require separation of your handgun from your immediate person.

7) What is the policy regarding alcohol?

- Alcohol is absolutely not allowed in University vehicles and trailers. By extension of this policy, no alcohol is permitted while camping, as alcohol cannot be transported in the vehicles and trailers. During field camp, alcohol may only be consumed by students over 21 at bars in the town of Dillon, Montana. Students must walk to these establishments, as the University vehicles will not be permitted for travel to and from the bars.

Reducing Risks in the Field

1) Van Safety. 15-passenger vans are notorious for roll over and other accidents. Most organizations have banned their use altogether. Problems with these vehicles can be mitigated by driving at a maximum speed limit of 65 mph and avoiding sudden jerking of the steering wheel. When entering turns on the road or the freeway, be sure to drive below the posted speed limit during the turn. University policy requires that the maximum number of passengers be limited to 10, including the driver. All persons should sit in seats that are in front of the rear axle and all should be wearing their seat belt. Drivers should limit their driving to 2-3 hours followed by a break. A driver should periodically check the van's tire pressure. Drivers should be extremely mindful when driving with a trailer due to the increased stopping distance and the potential for roll over. Use the 4 to 6 second rule to maintain a safe distance from traffic ahead of you, especially when towing a trailer.

2) Field Safety. There are several risks that present themselves when carrying out field work in either the field camp or during a department field trip.

- Heat and cold exposure. In Montana especially, heat exposure and cold exposure are both possible during field mapping. Faculty, teaching assistants, and students should be prepared for both situations by dressing in layers and carrying both a jacket and a rain coat. Hats are also helpful. Pants are preferred over shorts when doing field work to protect against the elements and rough vegetation.

- Barbed wire. Many of the field areas in southwestern Montana contain barbed wire fences that can obstruct traverses in the field. The preferred method of negotiating these fences (in lieu of a gate between fences) is to take off your backpack and place it on the side over the fence. One person can carefully lift up the bottom barbed wire while the other individuals slide underneath the fence. Avoid climbing on the fence posts as this may lead to the staples popping off and you becoming entrained in the barbed wire. If a gate is available between the barbed wire, be sure to leave it as you found it, e.g. if you find it closed, leave it closed when you leave.
- Wildlife and snakes. When doing fieldwork, all wildlife should be avoided. Of the 10 species of snakes in Montana, only one is venomous – the prairie rattlesnake (also called the western rattlesnake). When hiking, be constantly mindful of where you step and where you put your hands to avoid encounters with snakes.
- Road cuts. Visiting road cuts during field camp or a field trip can be potentially hazardous due to loose and falling rocks. Climbing is absolutely not permitted on the road cuts. All faculty and students should wear high visibility safety vests and stay as far away from the road as possible. Faculty should supervise students to make sure they stay clear of the road and that they are cognizant of the possibility of falling rocks.

Concluding Remarks

The ultimate goal of this field safety document is to provide mechanisms for risk mitigation during geology field trips and the department's field camp. All faculty and students should read this document and work together to reduce risks while enjoying the field.

- **The link(s) to the reporting policy at our organization are here:**
 - University of Arkansas Reporting Policies (Section 5 of Faculty/Staff Handbook)
 - [Report an incident at the University of Arkansas](#)
 - [Title IX](#)
 - [Office of Equal Opportunity and Compliance \(OEOC\)](#)
 - Reporting policies are regularly reviewed and are currently under review.
 - Certain reports are made available to the public ([Crime](#) and [Title IX](#))
- **What mechanisms are available for reporting complaints, bias, microaggressions, harassment, and overt racism?**
 - Anyone can make a report.
 - Reporting can be done [online](#), over the phone, or in person.
 - [Title IX Procedure and contact information.](#)
 - [OEOC procedure and contact information.](#)
 - [Anonymous reports](#) can be made over the phone but are not encouraged.

- In-person, phone, and online reports go to their respective departments for investigation. All reports are confidential and are only accessible on a need-to-know basis.
 - Liz Means, Title IX Compliance Coordinator (email: edavisme@uark.edu)
 - Shane Barker, Title IX Deputy Coordinator (email: sxb028@uark.edu)
 - J'onnelle Colbert-Diaz, OEOC Compliance Officer/ADA Coordinator (email: jcdiaz@uark.edu)
 - April Daniel, OEOC Grievance Officer (email: axd004@uark.edu)
 - Melanie Chandler, OEOC Case Manager (email: mxc028@uark.edu)
 - Police are not involved in the process unless the victim asks for police involvement.
- **What are the outcomes or consequences for reported individuals?**
 - A designated Compliance Officer decides the outcomes/consequences.
 - The process starts with an internal investigation/interviews. Both sides can engage legal counsel. The person target of a complaint is given opportunity to respond. Corrective measures can go from training to termination.
 - Are reports tracked? Yes/No
 - Title IX: “For a period of at least seven years, the University will maintain the records of: 1) Each sexual harassment investigation, including any determination regarding responsibility, any recordings or transcripts, disciplinary sanctions, and remedies provided to the complainant; 2) Any appeal and the result therefrom; 3) Any informal resolution and the result therefrom; 4) All materials used to train Title IX Coordinators, investigators, decision-makers, and any person who facilitates an informal resolution process. These materials will be made publicly available on the University’s website. 5) Records of any actions, including supportive measures, taken in response to a report or formal complaint of sexual harassment, along with documentation of the University’s bases for its conclusion that its response was not deliberately indifferent.”
“Documentation pertaining to terminations, expulsions or educational sanctions may be retained indefinitely.”
 - OEOC: “Investigation records will be maintained by OEOC, including for statistical purposes and to document that the University has responded to complaints. Investigation determinations and records of administrative actions taken in response will be kept in employee personnel files if a complaint is substantiated. Further, such a record may be retained in personnel records where a finding of a violation of this policy was not sustained but where administrative action was determined to be appropriate.”
“Records maintained by OEOC may include, but are not limited to, information to document receipt of the complaint and that the University has responded to all complaints; notification of the person against whom a complaint is made as well as their response; steps taken to investigate the complaint; and whether the complaint was a violation of policy. The records will document actions taken to stop discrimination (including discriminatory harassment) and any actions taken, corrective or disciplinary.”
 - For actions within the department the reports reside with the Department Chair. We recommend that the Chair annually provide the D&I committee with a summary report (by category) of complaints and outcomes. This

preserves institutional memory and allows for tracking of any persistent problems (e.g., multiple reports by multiple individuals of racial discrimination) as well as opportunity to track improvements and/or zero reported infractions.

- Resolution and punishment
 - Title IX: “The Title IX Coordinator will communicate a decision to the complainant and the respondent to the extent that it affects him/her. Remedies must be provided in all instances in which a determination of responsibility for sexual harassment has been made against the respondent. Remedies must be designed to restore or preserve equal access to the University’s education program or activity. Such remedies may include the same individualized services described above as “supportive measures”; however, remedies need not be non-disciplinary or non-punitive and need not avoid burdening the respondent.”
 - OEOC: “While OEOC does not impose disciplinary action, the respondent should be aware that the University takes allegations of discrimination (including discriminatory harassment) and retaliation very seriously. After OEOC conducts a fair, equitable, and timely investigation, OEOC may recommend corrective action to the appropriate University officials, if warranted. Such action can include, but is not limited to, specialized training, and other actions up to and including termination of employment or review under the Code of Student Life.”
- **What resources are available for individuals reporting?**
 - Support for those that need to report:
 - Student resources: [Title IX](#) and [OEOC](#)
 - Faculty/Staff resources: [Title IX](#) and [OEOC](#)
 - Reporting does not impact student grades or faculty/staff evaluations.
 - Students and faculty/staff are protected against retaliation or repercussions from reporting.
 - “The University prohibits retaliation based on a protected activity, such as the filing of a complaint of alleged discrimination (including discriminatory harassment, or sexual harassment) or participation in the investigation of such a claim. Any witness, complainant or respondent involved in an investigation shall not be retaliated against for their participation in the fact-finding process.”
- **What resources are available to groups raising issues or proposing changes?**
 - Currently, there is no option for students, faculty, or staff to propose large-scale policy change. (This could change in the future)
 - Policies are reviewed and updated over time.
 - [The 2019 – 2021 plan](#)
 - [The metric dashboard](#)
 - Leadership asks students and/or staff for input on how to improve via a [Suggestion box](#)