
NMNH Geoscience Pod, Session 6 Deliverable: Safety Plan

Our goal for this deliverable:

1. Provide a Code of Conduct template that can be used for our departments, lab spaces, research groups, field groups, etc.
2. Provide guidelines for safety and inclusivity within lab/research and field groups, emphasizing safety concerns that might be more serious for BIPOC and other minoritized groups
3. Provide a list of resources and links for further education and formal training
4. Provide brief summaries and/or links to existing SI policies for relating to safety and code of conduct

Because we do not currently have Codes of Conduct or safety/inclusivity guidelines for either the Paleobiology or Mineral Sciences Departments, we are also including some guidelines that make spaces more inclusive and safe for women, members of the LGBTQIA+ community, those with religious beliefs, etc.

This deliverable is in a draft format that will be further modified and reviewed by other members of our departments before implementation.

Code of Conduct

The Smithsonian has an institution-wide Code of Conduct that applies to all staff/badge holders. The Departments of Paleobiology and Mineral Sciences do not currently have more detailed, department-specific codes of conduct. In addition to museum-wide policies, we recommend our departments adopt more specific codes of conduct that cover interactions within departments, departmental events, research groups, fieldwork, workshops, visiting researchers, etc. This code of conduct should be modified and tailored as appropriate for different situations, and will add to existing SI/NMNH policies on conduct, safety, and anti-harassment.

- [SI Code of Conduct](#)
- [SI Policy on Prevention of Workplace Harassment](#)
- Smithsonian Anti-Harassment Hotline: (202) 633-6320
- Information about the [Smithsonian Ombudperson](#), (202) 633-2008; [PRISM page](#)

Recommended Departmental Code of Conduct:

1. Goals & Statement of Purpose

The [Paleobiology/Mineral Sciences] department aims to provide an environment that is welcoming, safe, and allows for the free expression and exchange of scientific ideas. In pursuit of that environment, the department is committed to equality, both in opportunity and in treatment, for all of its members. The department will strive to ensure that all department functions are conducted in a professional manner in which all participants are treated with dignity and respect without discrimination.

2. Scope

This code of conduct applies to all those who work in, volunteer in, or visit the department, and/or participate in departmental events. These include interactions within departments, departmental events, research groups, fieldwork, workshops, symposia, and visiting researchers and professionals.

3. Expectations

Members of the department (including but not limited to staff, contractors, fellows, and visiting researchers) are expected to support and uphold the goals and purpose of this code of conduct stated in Section 1. Specifically, they are expected to do the following:

- Behave according to professional standards and in accordance with their employers' policies on appropriate workplace behavior (e.g., [SI Code of Conduct](#), [SI Policy on Prevention of Workplace Harassment](#)).
- Treat others with dignity, respect, and equity regardless of their own or another's race, color, national or ethnic origin, immigration status, religion, age, marital status, parental status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, socioeconomic background, educational background, disability, genetic information, military service, or veteran status.
- Communicate with respect and civility in both verbal and nonverbal responses. Respectful disagreement is ok, but bullying is not acceptable.
- Do not practice, incite, encourage, or condone prohibited behavior (see Section 4).

4. Examples of Inappropriate Conduct

Inappropriate conduct will not be tolerated. Some specific examples of inappropriate behavior include, but are not limited to:

- Harassment, intimidation, or threats in any form (including microaggressions).
- Bullying or aggressive language.
- Written or verbal comments which have the effect of excluding people on the basis of membership of any specific group.
- Sexist, racist, homophobic, transphobic, ableist, or exclusionary jokes.
- Nonconsensual or unwelcome physical contact.
- Sustained disruption of talks, events or communications.
- Dissemination or publication of private communication (personal, scientific, or otherwise) or intellectual property without consent.

5. Reporting and Consequences of Inappropriate Conduct:

- Anyone asked to stop inappropriate behavior is expected to comply immediately.
- Any behavior that violates NMNH code of conduct and/or anti-harassment policies will be reported to appropriate supervisors following NMNH/SI guidelines. Additional information on reporting is documented in our Session 2 Deliverable ([Racism Complaints Policy/Complaints and Reporting Fact Sheet](#)).
 - Smithsonian Anti-Harassment Hotline: (202) 633-6320
 - Information about the [Smithsonian Ombudperson](#), (202) 633-2008; [PRISM page](#)
- Minor instances of misconduct may be documented and/or reported to appropriate supervisors. These may be used to later establish whether the severity and/or frequency of inappropriate behavior constitutes a violation of museum policies.
- Individuals who are members of one or more professional societies are expected to uphold codes of conduct and policies associated with that membership (e.g., The Paleontological Society's [Policy on Non-discrimination and Member Code of Conduct](#)). Behavior in violation may be reported to and reported by those professional societies independently of the NMNH and/or SI.

Additional Action Items:

We recommend the NMNH Geosciences pod take further action on the following items:

- Adopt the above Code of Conduct within each department, with modifications where necessary, and provide it to all department members.
- Encourage PIs and other leaders within departments to adopt these codes of conduct for their field, lab, and research groups, tailored as appropriate to the work environment.
- Develop a version of the Code of Conduct that can be given to visiting researchers, students, professionals, etc. who are visiting the collections or participating in departmental events (e.g., symposia, workshops, seminar series).

Lab/Museum Safety and Inclusivity Guidelines

Traditionally, safety policies have addressed issues of physical safety, but may not also include practices to prevent workplace harassment or foster inclusion. Safety policies for NMNH laboratory facilities are subject to annual review, and building safety policies are reviewed periodically. We recommend updating policies both for individual laboratories and overlayed building safety documents to be mindful of access and inclusivity for underrepresented staff, visitors, volunteers, and affiliates making use of these spaces. Here, "Lab" refers to both spaces with laboratory facilities as well as research groups.

Recommendations for Lab/Museum Safety and Inclusivity:

- **Code of Conduct:** Policies should refer to the department's Code of Conduct document and reinforce that all workers are to abide by Code standards.

- **Language review:** Review safety policies to remove or replace occurrences of gendered or gender-implying language.
- **Detailing safety standards for purposes of inclusivity:** Where policy refers to physical requirements for safety reasons, these policies should be better explained to avoid inferring exclusion. For example, a policy disallowing loose-fitting clothing could be changed to state that loose-hanging hair, clothing, or jewelry must be secured or overlain by PPE when using 'X' equipment, so as not to become entangled in machinery or risk exposure to sparks.
- **External partners:** Some laboratory safety standards are set by external agencies such as OSHEM (for example, fit testing and compliance for use of respirator masks as PPE).
- **Safety in numbers:** Best practices for safety include not having people conduct work tasks alone. However, it may not be realistic to require this. Recommend weighing best practices for prevention of harassment and ensuring physical security to develop policies. Recommend communicating with workers and acting on feedback regarding comfortable conditions. Examples of changes in policy could include 1) where possible, leaving doors propped open to rooms where no internal windows exist, 2) having department staff, supervisors, and/or Security staff check periodically on workers, and 3) communicating with Security as to who will be working in the building outside of common work hours.
- **Religious practices:** Be mindful of activities/practices, observed holidays and mandatory clothing.
- **Medication needs:** Provide necessary storage for medication that needs to be refrigerated, and/or food storage for medication that needs to be taken with food.
- **Safety outside of the building:** Consider the safety of those walking to and from mass transit, parking lots, etc. around facilities such as NHB and MSC. Provide resources for workers which can include contacts with Security staff, location of security call boxes, maps to closest mass transit stops, and recommendations for alternative transit services such as Guaranteed Ride Home service through Commuter Connections, etc.
- **Pronouns:** Be respectful of pronouns. Normalize sharing pronouns (e.g., he/she/they, him/her/them) for all group members.
- **Training and communication:** Introduction, onboarding, and training in regards to policies should include fostering communication among workers and supervisors regarding safety and inclusivity, to ensure that policies are updated regularly and best fit needs.

Additional Resources for Lab/Museum Safety:

- [SI SD 419 Safety, Health, and Environmental Program](#)
- [SI Safety Manual](#)
 - [Chapter 26 - Lab Safety Plans](#)
- [SI Procedures for Providing Reasonable Accommodation for Individuals with Disabilities](#)
- NMNH Safety Personnel
 - NHB: Rudy Anderson
 - MSC: Amanda Decker
- SI Security

- 24-hour emergency SF Help hotline: (202) 633-1560

Additional Action Items:

- Regularly review existing lab and field safety policies for inclusive language and add reference to departmental Code of Conduct
- Compile additional resources for safety that can be provided to both existing and incoming personnel (this will be covered in part by Deliverable 7)

Field Safety & Inclusivity Guidelines

Currently, there are no existing field safety policies or recommendations for either the Paleobiology or Mineral Sciences departments. We recommend PIs or others in leadership roles adopt clear safety policies for each field excursion and strive to make these experiences inclusive for all. These recommendations should be carefully considered and tailored to best fit the work environment and group. They should also be clearly communicated to all participants, along with the code of conduct. We recommend the following safety protocols for field excursions, with an emphasis on safety concerns for BIPOC and other minoritized groups; these should be combined with other, more general safety guidelines as appropriate for the fieldwork being conducted.

Recommendations for Field Safety and Inclusivity:

- **Code of conduct:** Have a code of conduct that clearly states expected behaviours for all participants during fieldwork. This may be very similar to the code of conduct described above, but should be tailored to fit the work environment where appropriate. Provide **all** participants involved in fieldwork with a copy of the code of conduct, regardless of their institutional affiliation or their degree of involvement with the fieldwork.
- **Site risk assessment:** Prior to fieldwork, evaluate potential risks, especially racial risks. Contact relevant institutional offices for risk management on how to best manage risk in the field. If travelling abroad, be aware of and abide by any international and local laws and customs, current political climate, and actual degree of law enforcement. Contact others that have previously done fieldwork at the location that your research group is going.
- **Review/revisit risk assessment:** After fieldwork, document all known cases of risk at the locations that you visited. Share this information with relevant institutional offices and with researchers that will use the same field site.
- **Communicate potential risks to the field team:** Have a conversation with all research team members on the risks and preparations to minimize risk, and reporting mechanisms. Pay special attention to concerns specific to people from minoritized backgrounds. If any researcher brings up potential or experienced risks, validate their experiences and assist in modifying the project so that they can safely continue conducting research. Review and agree upon fieldwork and safety plans with the research team members before any fieldwork begins.
- **Identification/Permission:** Where appropriate, provide team members with official-looking apparel and equipment, such as institution apparel, bumper stickers,

reflective vests, and safety cones. All members should be advised to always carry credentials; these include photo identification (driver's license, passports, institution identification), relevant permits, and documentation of permissions.

- **Accessibility:** If a member of the research team has a disability or specific medical need, make sure to provide adequate accommodations whenever possible. For example, note the infrastructure at the field site, rugged terrains, medication refrigeration, among others.
- **Emergency medical information:** Have each person involved in fieldwork fill out emergency medical forms (preexisting health conditions, allergies, medications being taken, emergency contact information) that will be kept in sealed envelopes. These should be brought into the field so that they can be provided to medical personnel or other colleagues onsite in the event of an emergency. The forms should be returned to the individual or destroyed at the end of fieldwork.
- **Physiology:** Include regular toilet stops when planning the fieldwork activities. Urination and menstruation 'kits' should be included in the field packing list.
- **Safety In Numbers:** BIPOC and other minoritized groups face greater risk of harassment and/or threats to personal safety. As much as possible, have members of the research team work in pairs or trios. Communicate with team members and act on feedback throughout fieldwork regarding effective and comfortable group conditions and dynamics.
- **Religious practices:** Be mindful of dietary restrictions, activities/practices, observed holidays and mandatory clothing.
- **Medication needs:** Make sure to find out in advance if anyone regularly takes medication that needs to be refrigerated or taken with food.
- **Lodging:** Allow people to stay in individual rooms/tents. If this is not possible, talk with each field participant individually about their comfort with sharing a room/tent. Also, avoid staying in places that traditionally housed enslaved people.
- **Work schedule:** Avoid long work days with few breaks. Instead, include bathroom and rest breaks along the day. Time for meals should also be planned for and clearly communicated.
- **Interactions with third parties:** Offer clear guidance about how field participants can report harassment or endangering behavior by third parties (landowners, public visitors, staff from other agencies, etc.) in field settings.

Resources & Links:

Education is an important first step in making our work environments safe and inclusive for everyone. The following resources are provided as a starting point, and take the form of articles, webinars, training opportunities, and more. All members of our departments are encouraged to learn from these resources, and they are critical for those holding leadership positions in labs, research groups, field excursions, etc.

Articles and recordings:

- Seven Ways PIs Can Counteract Systemic Bias Right Now:
https://eos.org/articles/seven-ways-pis-can-counteract-systemic-bias-right-now?fbclid=IwAR0oG1adWfrBYPU7ST_LrrVG9TKTrMz-2yD-Lbu507ED7RtysioapOMgV4g
- 10 Simple Rules for Building an Antiracist Lab
<https://urgeo.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/33/2021/03/Ten-Simple-Rules-for-Building-an-Antiracist-Lab.pdf>
- 10 Steps to Protect BIPOC Scholars in the Field:
<https://eos.org/opinions/ten-steps-to-protect-bipoc-scholars-in-the-field>
- Safer Science: Strategies to protect at-risk researchers when conducting fieldwork
https://vod.video.cornell.edu/media/Safer%20Science%3A%20Strategies%20to%20protect%20at-risk%20researchers%20when%20conducting%20fieldwork/1_noix4lInn
- The “Five D’s” for bystander intervention (training courses also available at this site):
<https://www.ihollaback.org/bystander-resources/>

Training resources

In addition to required training through the SI and NMNH, we recommend that everyone (especially those in leadership roles) educate themselves and/or take training in the following areas.

- Hollaback! offers free training on a wide range of anti-harassment subjects including antidiscrimination, bystander intervention, and de-escalation: <https://linktr.ee/ihollagram>
- NMNH offers training courses on First Aid, CPR, and Wilderness First Aid, which can help create a safer, more comfortable environment in field and lab settings