



URGE Safety Plan for Department of Earth Sciences, Dartmouth College

Introduction

The goal of this document is to establish a guide for best practices in the Dartmouth Earth Sciences department's shared office, common, and lab spaces as well as during fieldwork -- both the Department's off-campus field program, the Stretch, and fieldwork conducted by individual lab groups and classes in the Upper Valley and beyond. Below we link to existing documents created by the department over time and add suggestions for how these documents can be updated to better address racial, social, and cultural biases that may exist in all settings in which our students, faculty, and staff engage with each other. The guidelines and resources available here should be familiar to all members of the Dartmouth Earth Science community from undergraduates to emeritus professors.

This is a *living document* that will evolve to reflect the growth of our department in structure and identity.

Rather than rewriting a new document, here, we will link to existing documents and provide suggestions for new documents or resources to be created. We are aware of the guidelines for field work that are currently being developed as part of the Department Code of Conduct. Once the guidelines become available, we shall discuss the examples and recommendations outlined below with the department leadership.

A [Field Safety Document](#) drafted by Justin Strauss *et al.* outlines all of the physical hazards that groups and leaders should be aware of in physical settings. We would like to highlight their Field Safety Rights and following customizable safety protocol (not shown). Like this safety plan says, **we recommend that for any field trip, a safety plan based on this and other field documents -- tailored to the specific location/situation and including these Field Safety Rights -- be presented beforehand, printed out and given to each student while they are in the field, including on the Stretch.**

Field Safety Plan Sample, to be drafted and carried by each field member after adjustment by the Field Safety Officer (adapted from document by Justin Strauss et al.)

Students and Field Participants have the Field Safety Right:

- A. To be informed about the plans, nature of work, and the risks involved in remote fieldwork
- B. To express any general concerns about their safety and comfort, or that of the team
- C. To safe accommodations in a place and with people with whom they are comfortable
- D. To a social environment with which they are comfortable
- E. To reasonable attempts to provide adequate shelter, equipment, and food
- F. To not be left alone in remote field settings if not desired
- G. To carry remote field safety equipment, including communication devices
- H. To request and obtain training if available
- I. To be evacuated at no cost if the student feels a Title IX violation has occurred and wants to return to town for safety reasons and/or to file a complaint
 - a. **Recommendation:** include a plan to discuss both the reparations for the person who was violated (e.g., loss of an educational opportunity) and consequences for the perpetrator. If the longer-term response needs to wait until after the field work, outline what the immediate consequences for the perpetrator for the remainder of field work are.
- J. To be evacuated at no cost if the student feels they are experiencing a medical emergency
- K. To refuse to do activities if they feel unsafe
- L. To exercise all of the above without retaliation or adverse effect on academic progress

Safety Protocols and Resources for The Stretch — Dartmouth’s Off-Campus Field Program

Thankfully, lots of documents exist for The Stretch already, thanks to the Program Director Ed Meyer. Below, we briefly summarize each of these documents, many of which can be used for other field scenarios and provide recommendations to address gaps.

Faculty and Staff Safety and Policy Guide

- Primarily covers objective/physical hazards
- **Recommendation:** add sections addressing social, cultural, identity hazards

Incident Reporting Form

- A form for reporting form for physical injury
- **Recommendation:** include reporting discriminations against one’s racial/ethnic identity or other aspects of their identity as well

ISOS Card

- Information for Garmin InReach Service provider

Student Safety and Policy Guide (powerpoint presentation in EARS 40)

- Primary focus on objective hazards
- **Recommendation:** expand section on racism/biases/group dynamics/inclusivity

Sexual Assault Resources

- List of people to call at Dartmouth in the event of a sexual assault during a field program
- Sexual assault handout for students detailing policy

Site Safety Evaluations

- Outline for each site visited on the Stretch
- **Recommendation:** include a section of general ‘Site Evaluations’ which includes the social and cultural environments of the field site and suggestions (if any) on how to interact with the local host and communities in a respectful way

Student Safety Policy and Guide (PDF handout)

- Similar to powerpoint listed above but has everything written out clearly
- **Recommendation:** expand section on racism/biases/group dynamics/inclusivity

Type of Events to Report to Off-Campus Programs office and Ed

- Lists type of events that need to be reported
- **Recommendation:** consider expanding this list to include racially-charged incidents as well (see EARS Resource Flow Chart developed as part of the Session 2 deliverable, attached at the end of the document)

Van documents

- Safety protocols for using, traveling in, and maintaining vans while on The Stretch

Overall, we recognize there many resources related to physical safety in preparing for The Stretch, which should continue to be prioritized. However, we recommend that considerations of emotional, cultural, and social wellbeing all be part of preparation for the Stretch as well. In our recommendations, we suggest more education on racial bias and dynamics before the program, as well as increased options for formal reporting as a result of racially motivated events during the program.

Additionally, we **recommend an anonymous documenting form** to allow students and other participants to let the Program Director, faculty, staff, and TAs know of any incidents in which students feel uncomfortable or unsafe, that might not warrant official reporting, as would a

physical injury. We realize the development of this form might be complicated by the fact that faculty and TAs are not confidential resources. However, this form could be used to let instructors know of things *before* they get to the level of needing to be formally reported. For example, students and other participants could let instructors know of. The form should clearly state the reporting duties of TAs, staff and faculty members as responsible employees.

- Groups norms on the Stretch that could be exclusive
- Times in which they or another Stretchie felt physically uncomfortable in the field
- Specific situations or field exercises that are difficult for a member(s) of the stretch
- Situations or sites at which a participant(s) felt uncomfortable because of their identity
- Racial or ethnic bias in lessons or material presented by teachers or TAs on the Stretch

Action items for YOU (ongoing)

Think about what a (short) safety intro for your lab group or class would look like. Some items to think about are:

- What are the unspoken norms members of your group abide by currently?
- What are some things you would have to address when taking someone into the field with an identity different than yours, the majority of the group, or the historical demographics of a field researcher?
- What does onboarding in your group look like?
 - For graduate students?
 - For undergraduates?

Here's an example for the Fluvial Lab Group, created by graduate student Jordan Fields.

Dartmouth Stream Team Safety Plan:

The Stream Team does a considerable amount of local fieldwork, which offers opportunity and accessibility but also unique challenges. Some local fieldwork hazards include:

Interactions with landowners: These interactions may be more or less challenging depending on your identity and background. Strategies for dealing with landowners should be addressed by the PI before sending anyone out into the field for the first time or the first time to a new site. Ideally, the landowner should be contacted by the PI before any student goes to a site to make sure that access is still permitted (this implies contact will be made repeatedly to assure continual safety, not just once up front). Early action by PIs (or older graduate students who know sites/owners) takes the onus off of the student and prevents potentially uncomfortable or unsafe situations in the field.

Transportation to field sites: Traditionally, graduate students in this group have had their own cars to travel to field sites. This unspoken and unacknowledged requirement makes a high cost to entry for the group. For students who own a car, this issue is best addressed by facilitating repayment for mileage (which has been hard to navigate for students in the past, discouraging them for asking for repayment and instead taking on the cost themselves). However, for students who do not have cars, a department vehicle could be loaned. Additionally, hosting a dynamic research agenda in the group that doesn't necessitate fieldwork to earn a degree. Remote sensing is a growing part of our research agenda, offering opportunities for students uninterested by fieldwork or who feel unsafe in the field.

Racially charged interactions in the field: Most stream team field sites are close to roads, towns, bridges, trails, etc. meaning students working in the field, though usually in a rural area, are visible to the public. For some, this increased visibility might lead to tense situations, which could be racially charged. To address this issue, students should have the option to wear a high-visibility vest that easily identifies them as a Dartmouth researcher. In addition, students should not be asked to do fieldwork alone. Solo fieldwork is common practice in the group at this time but, again, makes a high cost to entry in feeling confident enough to go out alone to these sites. Furthermore, the objective hazard of being in a river alone, often at high water, is serious and should be mitigated by having a partner in the field. When graduate students are not able to go out together, PIs should readily volunteer to assist them in their work and should be ready to be the one to interact with the curious public or law enforcement, in such a scenario.

Field gear: Students in this group are asked to pay for field gear in advance and then may request reimbursement. This practice puts the burden on students, exacerbated by slow turn-around times for reimbursement by The College. The lab group should get a credit card so that students can buy PI-approved items without having to front the money. Additionally, the group should apply for money to buy a suite of new field gear that will allow more students to participate in fieldwork safely.

Objective hazards: Objective hazards to physical safety should be addressed as a group at the start of each new field season (spring/summer) with specific sites discussed, concerns evaluated, and plan formalized. Hazards should be listed in a physical document to be updated by the group at the beginning of each year so that knowledge can be shared with future students.

Leadership: Safety is the responsibility of all team members but should be spearheaded by the PI in addition to the most senior graduate students who are experienced with group protocols. Junior group members should not be put in the position to have to raise safety concerns constantly. That said, the group environment and emphasis on safety should make raising safety concerns easy and comfortable for any member of the group. Senior members should be prepared to receive feedback

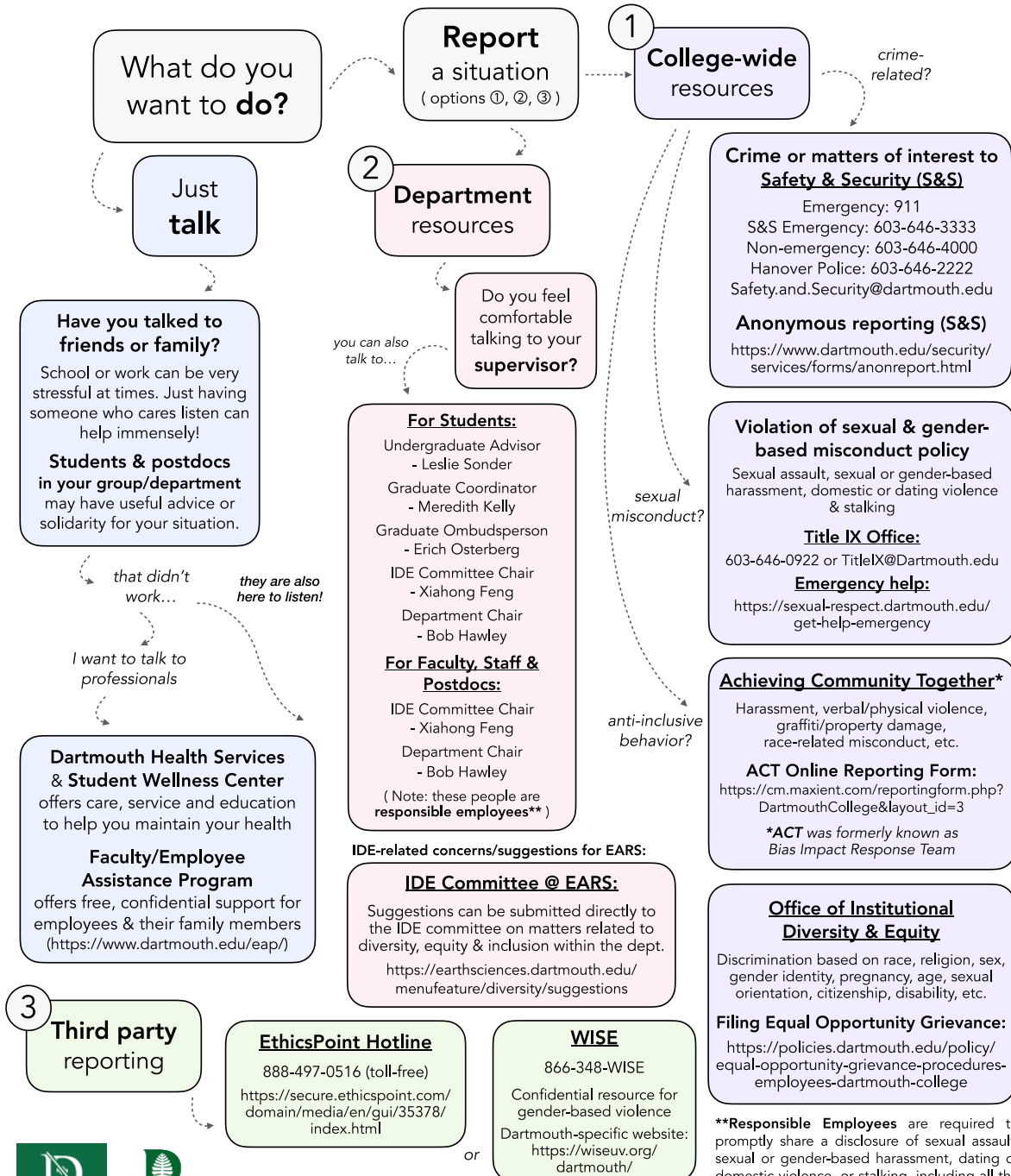
and use it to make the group better rather than taking offense to their existing protocols -- new challenges will assuredly arise and this safety plan will be frequently adjusted.

More resources:

The document in the following page summarizes the resources available for all members of the department on- and off-campus. Most of the content was developed as part of the URGE deliverable for Session 2 and was turned into a flow chart as a visual resource for the department. PIs can refer to this resource to develop safety plans for their lab/office/field work.

Do you have concerns?

Whether you are an undergraduate or graduate student, post-doc or researcher, staff or faculty member, there are ways to get support.



Created / last updated March 2021
 Contact jeemin.h.rhim@dartmouth.edu for questions or suggestions
 Inspired by the flow chart from Resources for Easing Friction and Stress (REFS) at MIT