



Safety Protocol for the Department of Geological and Environmental Sciences (GES) at Appalachian State University (ASU)

Upon approval by the GES department, GES 2751 (Geology Field Methods), GES 2752 (Environmental Science Field Methods), and GES 4835 (Summer Field Geology/Field Camp) will include the following materials starting in Spring 2022:

1. Field safety protocols: student guidelines and expectations

1a. Prior to fieldwork, all students will be required to attend a discussion on field safety, containing explicit expectations for fieldwork involving camping and lack of bathroom facilities. Right now we plan to have two faculty (both male and female) administer these information sessions. Topics for discussions are adjustable based on course needs (i.e. fieldwork involving overnight camping, fieldwork in deserts, fieldwork in polar regions, etc.).

Discussion topics will include:

- How to go to the bathroom outdoors, rules about waste disposal (carry out vs. burial). Faculty moderators will also discuss dealing with menstruation in the field, and allow students to submit anonymous questions and/or have breakout groups for students to discuss best practices together, where more experienced students provide assistance/tips to less experienced students.
- Water and food safety (stressing the importance of hydration), rules about food waste disposal
- Basic first aid (and rules for what to do if someone gets hurt)
- Clothing safety (i.e. dressing for the weather and terrain)
- Sun safety (hats, hydration with electrolytes, sunscreen reapplication, light, loose clothes: long sleeves, work gloves, shade when possible, chapstick, sunglasses); recognizing sun poisoning vs. heat exhaustion vs. dehydration)
- Identification of dangerous plants/animals/insects, as well as how to avoid chiggers, how to remove ticks (include discussion of tick-borne illnesses), how to deal with livestock and fences/gates, and how to use bear spray
- The importance of the buddy system, particularly for students who are demographically less safe in a specific field environment.
- The importance of open communication with field partners to discuss concerns and needs, particularly as regarding race/religion in specific field settings.
- Emphasis that personal safety and health is more important than completing the assignment. A student field safety rights document will be provided and discussed (modified from the field safety document from University of Alaska - Fairbanks).
- Be clear that no weapons are allowed, under any circumstances.

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1b. A practice “outdoors” day will be available at the beginning of each semester for students who do not have much outdoor/field experience.

- Students will be taken to an appropriate location in the region (either in a nearby state park or National Forest location, or on private land with permission from the landowner) to practice how to set up and take down a tent, how to pack a field pack, etc. Students will be expected to practice using the bathroom outside with a trowel or rock hammer for waste disposal.

Note: We are still discussing if this practice outdoors day should be mandatory for all field students, or voluntary. This will need to be discussed with the GES department as a whole.

1c. Codes of Conduct and Community Rules:

- Before fieldwork (particularly field camp), students and faculty will draft a set of community rules we all agree to abide by. These rules are set by the students and are likely to change somewhat from year to year. Rather than having instructors make a checklist, there is likely to be more useful discussion and buy-in if students are involved in the code of conduct writing process. Guidelines may be suggested/included in the community rules by the instructors if the students do not think to come up with it on their own (i.e. compliance with Title IX laws, FERPA, alcohol and drug laws, etc.).

1d. Active bystander/de-escalation training:

- Students will be trained in basic bystander and de-escalation techniques, modified from the materials presented at the [ADVANCEGeo Workshops](#) and other programs. Given the demographics and political history of the region where we typically take students to perform routine fieldwork for early required courses (GES 2745, GES 2751, GES 2752), we will also discuss potential scenarios of racial and sexual harassment and intimidation from local community members and how to best respond in the moment. These training materials are likely to change based on field site and situation.

Note: active bystander training is a long-standing request we have made to the university but they have (so far) not provided us with any funding to schedule a workshop. We will do our best train students in these techniques using publicly available materials, but as we have not been trained ourselves, this part of the safety plan will need significant revision and expansion.

- Students will be required to remain in a group during encounters with law enforcement. No student will be left alone with police officers or hostile community members at any time. Students should remain calm and polite, but be encouraged to document potentially hostile interactions with police/community members via cell phone video, and to call the instructor's cell phone ASAP.

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2. Field Safety Protocols: Departmental Field Safety Gear and Materials

2a. We currently provide “Prep Kits” for our introductory field methods course (GES 2745, to be replaced by GES 2750/2751/2752 in Spring 2022), which contain field notebooks, sharpies, colored pencils, rulers and protractors, clipboards, safety whistles, etc.

Prep kits will be updated to include the following materials:

- “Who to Report to” sheet (modified from URGE deliverable from Session 2) with reporting mechanisms for harassment/assault/etc.
- Laminated sheet with the following information, to be given to community members or law enforcement who are concerned about a student’s presence in a particular location:

A template letter for reporting a student's presence in a particular location. The letter is on a white background with a light blue border. In the top right corner, there is a circular logo for the Department of Geological and Environmental Sciences at Appalachian State University. The text of the letter is as follows:

To Whom It May Concern,

This letter is to verify that _____ is a student of the Department of Geological and Environmental Sciences at Appalachian State University

If you require any additional information regarding this student, please feel free to contact me at (XXX-XXX-XXXX) or their instructor (_____) at (XXX-XXX-XXXX).

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Cynthia Liutkus-Pierce, PhD
Chairperson
Department of Geological and Environmental Sciences
Appalachian State University
Boone, NC 28608

If this is an emergency and the student is unable to communicate, please contact the following people:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

- Checklist with field needs (tent, sleeping bag, lots of water, sunscreen, raincoat, hat) and things that will make you more comfortable (dry socks, headlamp), bandaids, bandana, etc.
- Small first aid kit (if budget allows)

2b. The GES Department will also purchase the following shared materials for students:

- high-visibility vests for field trips (with the GES logo) that students will wear in the field to identify them as GES students rather than trespassers, and to foster group cohesion

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- Tents and rain gear (frog togs/ponchos) for students who do not have their own field gear

3. Field Safety Protocols: instructor guidelines

3a. Student Relationships:

To avoid resentment and frustration between field partners, GES instructors who have fieldwork components to their courses or research programs will address the following items when planning fieldwork:

- To the best of an instructor's ability, put people with similar physical/mental working styles together for major field projects.
 - Do not pair students who move quickly in the field with students who move slowly.
 - Do not pair students who have opposing notetaking styles and work ethic (i.e. do not pair meticulous, slow, or less confident students with fast, brash, or overconfident students)
- Pay attention to off-the-cuff comments and personality styles when pairing students for independent fieldwork. Do not put anyone who has displayed concerning comments or attitudes about certain demographics with members of those groups.
 - Within the assignment, let students know to tell instructors if they become uncomfortable working with someone
- Strongly discourage partnerships between roommates and romantic partners, so that academic problems do not spill over into personal problems, and vice versa.
 - Prior to fieldwork, have students provide a confidential list of people in the class that the student is unable to work with (*instructors should be clear that they neither need nor want to know the reasons why*) via the online course management system. In general, this will not be an issue early in a student's GES career because they are new to the program and do not know each other yet, but this process becomes very important for later courses once students in a tight-knit department have known each other for several years.

3b. Student safety from police and local community:

- If students will be doing fieldwork in a place where the police are likely to be called (i.e. on roadcuts where backpacks are left at the base of the outcrop, which are locally associated with methamphetamine drops), instructors should contact the local sheriff's office ahead of time to let them know the schedule and location of fieldwork. Local landowners should also be contacted, if students will be near private land.
- Instructors should pay close attention to state laws involving cooperation between ICE and local police/sheriff departments if they have undocumented students in their course.
- Instructors should encourage students to communicate any concerns they have about potential field locations or field scenarios at the beginning of the course, so that they can



collaborate on accommodations that would support student safety (i.e. pair specific students together, have instructor check in with student at set time intervals, etc.).