

URGE Field Safety Plan for Byrd Polar and Climate Research Center and the School of Earth Sciences at The Ohio State University

This is a draft.

Introduction

All research, whether conducted in a laboratory or in an outdoor field setting, requires safety training. Individuals are responsible for maintaining personal safety, as well as for performing research in a manner that does not endanger the safety of others. The Ohio State University Office of Environmental Health and Safety provides safety information and training to faculty, staff, and students.

Field research is defined as work activities conducted for the purpose of research by employees or students of the university outside of a research laboratory. Field research hazards may be presented by research activities, as well from the physical, political, social, cultural and/or economic environment of the field location. While some events may be unpredictable or unavoidable, the risks associated with field research can be greatly reduced through training, awareness of hazards and exercising good judgment.

This guide is useful for graduate and professional students, postdoctoral scholars, staff, faculty members, researchers, and all involved in creating safe, welcoming environments for scholarly activities that take place during fieldwork. This guide also has information for anyone who has been impacted by sexual harassment, violence, and/or stalking in the field.

Preparation

All field team members must review and abide by the [Byrd Center Code of Conduct](#). Students must also abide by OSU's [Student Code of Conduct](#).

All PIs or field leaders must complete the [Byrd Field Safety Plan Template](#).

- For field work in off-campus locations, develop a field safety plan with site information and emergency procedures. Taking the time to compile a thorough safety plan and discuss it with your team will prepare you to more effectively manage risks that arise in the field. It serves as a risk assessment tool, refers to other protocols or training, and can be used to brief your field team on trip logistics and precautions. The written plan should include the general nature of research activities, itinerary, local contacts, and emergency contacts for each field team member.

- Establish a local point of contact in case of emergencies. When working with local community members, familiarize yourself with the expertise, culture, history, language, land, etc. of the location you will be visiting.
- Identify appropriate equipment, gear and first aid supplies. Ensure that all team members have access to reliable means of communication, such as Wi-Fi and/or satellite phone(s) with on-campus contacts programmed into the device.
- When planning field research, know and utilize inclusive safety protocols and risk assessments for all team members including those with minoritized identities regarding race, ethnicity, gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, physical ability, religious and cultural beliefs, age, socioeconomic status, and/or any other attribute. Awareness of how groups with different identities are perceived and treated by others in different environments is key for ensuring safe and inclusive field experiences.
- For international travel, check the [U.S. State Department travel site](#) and the [OSU Office of International Affairs](#) for current travel alerts.
- For international travel, make sure you and your team are up to date on immunizations. Employee Health Services (614-293-8146) offers tetanus, Hepatitis B, Hepatitis A, and rabies immunizations for those traveling on university business.
- Refer to [Safety Guidelines for Field Researchers](#) and [Field Work Safety Information](#) from the Office of Environmental Health and Safety for more information.

Available Training at OSU

First-aid/CPR - <https://sfhp.ehe.osu.edu/first-aid-and-cpr/>

OSU Wilderness First Responder - <https://sfhp.ehe.osu.edu/backcountry-first-aid/>

Self-defense - <https://dps.osu.edu/safety-classes/rad-classes;>
<https://sfhp.ehe.osu.edu/self-defense-for-women/>

Active Bystander - https://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/sites/default/files/2019-08/Active_Bystander_Handout_2019.pdf

OSU Minors policy - https://policies.osu.edu/assets/docs/policy_pdfs/ActivitiesandProgramswithMinorParticipants.pdf

Any further specialized training should be arranged by the PI or field team leader.

In the Field

Regular check-ins with field members to discuss safety concerns. Solicit anonymous feedback to determine the climate and safety of the site and accommodations.

Brief your team often on the plan, timing, their roles and responsibilities, potential hazards, necessary equipment, concerns, etc.

Affirmative consent – Set a tone for a safe learning environment.

Support good mental health by optimizing learning instead of focusing on assessment, reducing environmental stressors as much as possible, keeping the length of field activities to a reasonable number of hours per day, offering an opportunity for privacy in the evening, ensuring participants can contact their support structure, and having a compassionate and non-judgmental attitude towards participants expressing distress.

Inclusivity and Equity– create and maintain opportunities in the field for women and people of color, and other minoritized groups. Ensure equitable division of labor. Each individual is unique, and the best way to determine an inclusion strategy is to include team members in discussions about potential barriers and approaches to inclusion.

Make time for adequate toilet stops for all members and consider members' privacy concerns for making such stops.

Inform field managers at the site or neighboring communities that research is being conducted in the region and include institutional affiliation.

Researchers should preferably not go into the field alone, but if it is necessary to go alone, they should have a supervisory point of contact with a communication plan of regular check-ins. If researchers feel unsafe at any time, they should communicate this with their supervisors. Supervisors should validate their experiences and provide modifications to complete the work.

Always carry relevant permits and credentials that demonstrate affiliation with OSU (The Byrd Center can supply a letter of support). Safety vests and Byrd Polar T-shirts are available.

Reporting and Responding

This section provides tips for responding with care and concern to individuals who share that they have been impacted by harm or violence in the field. Refer to the [Office of Institutional Equity](#) and the [Title IX Office](#) for more information.

- Find a safe environment. Ensure the survivor feels emotionally and physically safe.
- Listen and provide nonjudgmental support. Ask the survivor what they need.
- Clarify your role as a mandated reporter. All Ohio State employees, including student employees, are required to report incidents of sexual assault immediately.
- Connect them to resources (i.e., medical care, police, counseling, etc). Do not pressure or force them to take any action.
- Validate and affirm their choices.

If someone is in crisis or distress, students can reach out to Office of Student Life's Counseling and Consultation Service (CCS) by visiting ccs.osu.edu or calling 614-292-5766. Emergency help is available through the National Suicide Prevention Hotline 1-800-273-TALK.

When traveling internationally, contact the Office of International Affairs for Emergencies: <https://oia.osu.edu/global-risk-safety/emergencies-and-incidents/emergencies-abroad/>

Resources

https://www.ucop.edu/safety-and-loss-prevention/_files/field-research-safety/uc-field-research-safety-manual.pdf

https://serc.carleton.edu/advancegeo/resources/field_work.html

<https://gradschool.cornell.edu/diversity-inclusion/faculty-resources/practical-steps/>

https://care.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/PTC_201130_Grad-Student-Field-Placement-Guide-1.pdf

<https://ehs.berkeley.edu/field-research>

<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41559-020-01328-5>

<https://eos.org/opinions/ten-steps-to-protect-bipoc-scholars-in-the-field>

<https://cals.cornell.edu/saferscience>

<https://ccs.osu.edu>

<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41561-018-0219-0>

Byrd Polar and Climate Research Center: Code of Conduct

The following principles are designed to ensure that members of the Byrd Polar and Climate Research Center meet the highest standard of professionalism and that all members, including our faculty, staff, students, collaborators, and visitors feel welcome and respected. The geosciences as a discipline have historically exhibited a lack of diversity. This lack of diversity partly results from a culture of marginalization and discriminatory systems that do not afford all individuals the same professional opportunities. We strive to promote an inclusive environment for all.

This Code of Conduct provides specific expectations for behavior, a transparent process for accountability and responding to infractions, and resources from the university and professional membership organizations in our discipline. These principles will guide our efforts to drive deeper cultural change that improves our working conditions and maximizes our potential.

These principles were adapted from the [Princeton Physics Department, GSA Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct](#), and [Ohio State's School of Earth Sciences](#).

Code of Conduct

As such, all members are expected to follow these principles regardless of virtual or physical setting, including on campus, at conferences, in the field, in the community, or any other setting where members are representing the Byrd Center.

Respect and support department members:

- Respect the professional, physical, and personal boundaries of all members of Byrd.
- Take all reasonable steps necessary to ensure health and safety in the laboratory, field, and other professional settings. Notify the appropriate authorities of any violations or incidents that appear to create a threat to public health and safety.
- When planning field research, external lab work, or any other expeditions outside of the Byrd Center, utilize inclusive safety protocols and risk assessments for all team members including those with minoritized identities regarding race, ethnicity, gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, physical ability, religious and cultural beliefs, age, socioeconomic status, and/or any other attribute.
- Be courteous in your interactions.
- Be respectful of other peoples' opinions. Give members a chance to voice their thoughts (i.e., listen, try not to interrupt).

- Ensure that, when solicited and offered, criticism is constructive and aims to create positive discussion. Do not denigrate the work of others.
- Work to ensure that all members have equal access to professional and academic opportunities. Use clear, unbiased criteria when making decisions and taking actions that affect members' professional and academic opportunities.
- For those in positions of power, treat students and others under authority respectfully, without exploitation or denigration. Provide a safe, supportive environment to encourage learning and professional development.
- Do not judge, discriminate, or harass anyone based on race, ethnicity, country of birth, gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, physical ability and appearance, religious and cultural beliefs, age, socioeconomic status, and/or any other attribute.
- Do not make unwelcome jokes or disparaging remarks based on race, ethnicity, country of birth, gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, physical ability and appearance, religious and cultural beliefs, age, socioeconomic status, and/or any other characteristic.
- Byrd members will not accept intolerant behavior. If you witness such behavior and feel safe enough to do so, speak up and intervene.
- Support those who report violations of departmental or university policy.
- Do not engage in professional or personal retaliation against other members.

Commit to openness:

- Be receptive to discussions of ways to improve the work environment and work relationships, including discussions about cultural differences, racial disparities, and our personal roles in building Center-wide community.
- Challenge your own assumptions about people and become comfortable with recognizing your own privilege and complicity in inequity.
- Embrace opportunities to learn more, attend seminars, and undergo training on recommended practices for creating a safe and inclusive environment for all.
- Take it upon yourself to establish equity* for all persons. Consider the particular challenges or barriers to success that colleagues may face as members of under-represented groups.

*Here, equity refers to providing people resources needed to succeed, even if that differs from individual to individual. This is distinct from equality, which gives all individuals the same resources regardless of their starting point.

Take initiative:

- Intervene when others are exhibiting conduct unbecoming of a community member.

- Speak up when colleagues are disrespectful of an individual, or of a group or class of people (even when members of that group are not present).
- Seek and support opportunities for education and training on diversity, inclusivity, reporting, and bystander intervention techniques, and encourage others to do the same. See [available training](#) below.
- Acquaint yourself with university policy as set forth in OSU policy on [sexual misconduct](#) and [non-discrimination/harassment](#); stay up to date with changes in the university policy. See [OSU policies](#) below.
- Know methods for reporting problems and violations of the code of conduct. See [reporting resources](#) below.

Accountability and Response to Infractions:

If an incident occurs, here are the steps all members should be aware of and that will be followed by leadership as appropriate. For any reporting procedures, documentation of evidence is an important part of the process, especially regarding individuals who continue to offend. If you are documenting an incident involving another person who is being harassed, always ask what they want you to do with the documentation.

- Have a one-on-one conversation.
 - Do not assume malicious intent but remember that intent does not diminish the impact.
 - Address the discomfort. Although confronting an individual may make them uncomfortable and defensive, convey to them how their words or actions made you or others uncomfortable. Use “I” statements, not “you” statements.
 - In the case of a microaggression, you may ask the individual to clarify their meaning by asking questions such as “What do you mean by that?” to encourage them to consider their underlying biases.
- Invite a neutral or trusted third party to the conversation.
 - Mediation services are available through the [Office of Ombuds](#) for faculty and graduate students, the [Office of Postdoctoral Affairs](#) for postdocs, and the [Office of Human Resources](#) for faculty, staff, and graduate students.
 - Ask a trusted third party for assistance; ideally someone in a position with power to do something about the incident or at least provide the necessary support, such as a supervisor, department chair, lab or field station manager, program director, a more senior student, or a trusted individual.
- Start a formal process.
 - As per OSU’s [Employee and Labor Relations Investigation Standards](#), a report/allegation can be made by individuals who are directly involved in, who observe, or who reasonably believe violations of OSU policies may have occurred.
 - Submitting a [Workplace Complaint Form](#) through HR or call 614-292-2800

- File an anonymous report at 866-294-9350 or [online](#).
- For instances of discrimination or harassment, contact the [Office of Institutional Equity](#).
- In emergency situations or incidents involving crime (e.g., cyberbullying), contact campus or local police and/or EMS.

Resources

Ohio State University Policies

- [Policies at Ohio State - Sexual Misconduct](#)
- [Sexual Misconduct Policy FAQ](#)
- [Policies at Ohio State - Affirmative Action, Equal Employment, Opportunity, & Non-Discrimination/Harassment](#)
- [Code of Student Conduct](#)

Reporting

- [Office of Ombuds](#) – mediation services for faculty and graduate students
- [Office of Postdoctoral Affairs](#) – services and resources for postdoc
- [Human Resources Mediation](#)
- [Bias Assessment and Response Team \(BART\)](#)
- [Anonymous Reporting Line](#); phone: 866-294-9350 – for reporting breaches of any university policies
- [Office of Institutional Equity](#) – all Title IX and discrimination complaints are directed to OIE.
- [Workplace Complaint Form](#) – for staff complaints

Available Training and Information

- [Office of International Affairs Safety Guidelines](#)
- [Office of International Affairs Health Guidelines](#)
- [Ohio State Title IX Training - Sexual Misconduct Prevention](#)
- [Implicit Bias Training from the Kirwan Institute](#)
- [Open Doors - Reducing Overall Bias](#)
- [Safe Zone Project - LGBTQ+ topics](#)
- [Inclusive Teaching](#)
- [OSU Office of Diversity and Inclusion - Faculty, Staff and Student Resources](#)
- [OSU Disability Services - Best Practices and Resources for Faculty/Staff](#)
- [Community kits from the OSU Multicultural Center](#)

All Byrd members are encouraged to read additional guidelines from scientific societies and professional organizations for reference. Select examples are included below:

- [GSA Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct](#)
- [AGU Scientific Integrity and Professional Ethics](#)
- [AAPG Code of Conduct](#)
- [SACNAS National Conference Code of Conduct](#)
- [AAAS Annual Meeting Code of Conduct](#)
- [NSF Harassment Term and Condition](#)

Byrd Polar Field Safety Plan

Field Site Location:	<i>Descriptive name of research location (e.g. Carrizo Plain, CA; Tortuguero, Costa Rica)</i>		
Activity Description:	<i>Type, length, and purpose of activity (e.g. hiking 3-4 miles, collecting specimens, etc.)</i>		
Plan Created for:	<i>Name of Research Group / Course / Trip Leader</i>	Date of revision:	<i>Mo-Day-Yr</i>
Date(s) of Travel:	<i>Start date, duration, expected return to campus</i>		

Byrd Polar Field Safety Plan

A field safety plan serves as a tool to document your hazard assessment, communication plan, emergency procedures, and training. This plan should identify hazards, as well as precautions and actions taken to address and mitigate those hazards. Instructions:

1. Complete this field safety plan: insert specifics for your site and operations, delete irrelevant sections.
2. Complete appropriate training for your site and operations (e.g., first aid, altitude sickness, task-specific training), and review the Byrd Code of Conduct.
3. Obtain immunizations for your destination, if applicable, from [Ohio State Employee Health](#).
4. Each team member must complete the [Byrd Polar Disclosure and Release of Claims Form](#).
5. Hold a pre-trip meeting with your group and/or supervisor to review your field safety plan, travel logistics, pack list (including first aid kit), personal safety and security concerns, and any remaining training needs.

Site Information	
Location	Latitude: XX.XX (from GPS/Map) Longitude: XX.XX (from GPS/Map)
Site Information	<i>Elevation, terrain, environment.</i>
Travel to Site	<i>How will participants get to the field site? Note any dangerous roads, conditions.</i>
Site Access	<i>Are there any particular restrictions or challenges to accessing the site? Note any alternate routes or suggested parking, gate access codes, etc. Make special note if isolated or remote.</i>
Environmental Hazards	<i>Describe any dangerous wildlife, insects, endemic diseases, poisonous plants, etc. that participants may encounter. Note intended mitigation measures; discuss prior to trip.</i>
Security	<i>High risk for harassment or violence? Note intended mitigation measures; discuss prior to trip. For international travel, check the U.S. State Department travel site and the OSU Office of International Affairs for current travel alerts.</i>
LGBTQ+ legislation	<i>Are there laws against homosexual or transgender individuals?</i>
No Go Criteria	<i>What are the conditions under which approach to - or activities at - the site should be stopped or canceled? e.g., heavy rains, electrical storms, snow, temperatures > 100 degrees, within 2 hours of high tide, wave heights over 1 meter, etc.</i>
Expected Weather	<i>Note extreme conditions that could impact the trip or require additional planning, (e.g. high heat, wind, rain, snow, approaching storm).</i>
Drinking Water Availability	<input type="checkbox"/> Plumbed/potable water available <input type="checkbox"/> Water cooler provided <input type="checkbox"/> Bottled water provided <input type="checkbox"/> Natural source and treatment methods (e.g., filtration, boiling, chemical disinfection)
High Altitude Procedures	Effective means of communication, observation, and monitoring for signs of altitude sickness are required at all times. Pre-work safety discussion required. <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/> Direct supervision <input type="checkbox"/> Buddy system <input type="checkbox"/> Reliable cell or radio contact <input type="checkbox"/> Other:

Byrd Polar Field Safety Plan

Emergency Services and Contact Information			
Local Contact	Name, address & phone #, may be a local colleague/institution, reserve manager, USFS office, etc. Lodging location: name, address, phone #	University Contact Not on trip. Provide a copy of this plan.	Name, number, email; may be a Professor/PI, department contact, supervisor back on campus, etc. Frequency of check ins: daily, at end of work day, etc.
Emergency Medical Services (EMS)	Procedures for contacting emergency medical services.		
Nearest Emergency Department (ED)	Evacuation plan and transportation options to the nearest Emergency Department; include estimated transport time, contact information and driving directions from the site to the nearest provider of emergency medical care. Attach map with specific directions.		
Cell Phone Coverage	Primary Number: Coverage: good, spotty, none Nearest location with coverage:	Satellite phone/device	Device carried? <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no Type/number:
Nearby Facilities	What facilities are available at or near the site: restrooms, water, gas, public phone, store? If not, where are the nearest services along the route?		
Side Trips	Are side trips planned or allowed during free time? Before or after the planned activities? Are there restrictions, specific rules, or expected code of conduct?		
Participant Information			
Field Team/ Participants	Is anyone working alone? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If yes, develop a communications plan with strict check-in procedures; if cell coverage is unreliable, carry a satellite communication device or personal locator beacon. Primary Field Team Leader: Name, phone number Secondary Field Team Leader: Name, phone number <input type="checkbox"/> Field Team/Participant list is attached as training documentation <input type="checkbox"/> Other attachment: e.g., course roster		
Physical Demands	List any physical demands required for this trip and training/certification provided. e.g., diving, swimming, hiking, climbing, high altitudes, respirators, heights, confined or restricted spaces, etc.		
Mental Demands	List any unique mental demands required for this trip, e.g., long travel days, high stress environments, different cultural norms, etc.		
First Aid Training & Supplies	List team members trained in first aid and the type of training received. Location and description of group medical/first aid kit: Who is carrying it, where is it stored. Brief description of contents.		
Medical Disclosure	Each team member must complete the Byrd Polar Disclosure and Release of Claims Form		
Immunizations or Medical Evaluation	List required immunizations or required medical evaluation, if applicable. For travel-related immunizations or medical advice, contact the OSU Employee Health at 614-293-8146 several weeks prior to your trip.		

Byrd Polar Field Safety Plan

Equipment and Activities	
Research Activities	<i>Briefly describe the goal of your field operations, e.g., collection of samples, observation of animals/environment, interviews with human subjects, etc.</i>
Field Transportation	<i>What vehicles will be used during field operations? e.g., chartered boat, paddle craft, car, ATV, truck with trailer, snowmobile, chartered plane or helicopter, etc.</i>
Research Tools	<i>Briefly describe tools or equipment that will be used to access the research site or during research activities. Indicate specific training required before use, e.g., sharps (knives, razors, needles), hand tools, chainsaws, power tools, heavy machinery, tractors, specialty equipment, firearms; lasers, portable welding/soldering devices; other hazardous equipment or tools.</i>
Other Research Hazards	<i>Describe other potential research-associated hazards e.g., handling or shipping hazardous materials (chemical, biological, radiation, and explosives), handling animals, climbing, or working at heights, rigging; shoring/trenching, digging/entering excavations, caves, other confined spaces; drone use.</i>
Personal Protective Equipment	Required—e.g., boots, safety glasses, hardhats, cold weather gear etc. Recommended – e.g., walking sticks, gloves, long pants, hats, insect repellent, sunscreen
Additional Considerations	
Insurance	
International Activities	Visas, permits, finances, import/export controls, transportation of specialized equipment, and data security must be considered.
Personal Safety & Security	Personal safety risks during free time should be considered and discussed in advance, e.g., alcohol or drug use, leaving the group, situational awareness, sexual harassment, or local crime/security concerns for all team members including those with minoritized identities regarding race, ethnicity, gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, physical ability, religious and cultural beliefs, age, socioeconomic status, and/or any other attribute. PIs or field team leaders should review expectations and set the tone for a safe, successful trip.
Campus Contacts	
OSU PD	614-292-2121
Ohio State Employee Health Services	Ohio State Employee Health Faculty/Staff: 614-293-8146 Students:
Byrd Polar	Michele Cook; 614-292-7972; cook.942@osu.edu
International Travel Emergency Assistance	International Affairs: 614-292-6101 Ohio State 24/7 International Emergency Phone Line: 614-292-6677 GeoBlue Global Health and Safety Services: +1-610-254-8771
Report Injuries	

Byrd Polar Field Safety Plan

Signature of PI/Supervisor:

I acknowledge this safety plan has been prepared for field work under my supervision.

Name	Signature	Date	Phone Number

Field Team/Participant Roster - Training Documentation

I verify that I have read this Field Safety Plan, understand its contents, and agree to comply with its requirements.

Name/Phone Number	Signature	Date	Emergency Contact/Phone Number