

Research Safety: COVID-19 Guide

1 Introduction: Purpose

The *Research Safety: COVID-19 Guide* is intended to provide updates to fundamental health and safety practices for researchers essential during the 2020 Covid-19 Pandemic. The information presented in this document is subject to change in the rapidly changing environment.

We are all adjusting to major changes in research operations, including issuances by federal, provincial, and local authorities. We are working in unprecedented times and as always are committed to providing a safe and healthy work environment for all members of the campus community. We appreciate your continued patience and cooperation as we work through these times as a community. Campus leaders continue to work with local and national health officials to implement safety management processes in this time of rapid change and uncertainty.

During these conditions, it is imperative that:

- Sick workers do not enter campus;
- Personal protective equipment, health and safety supports and utilities/supplies are confirmed to be available before work begins;
- Plans and practices are developed to reduce the risk of spreading illness to levels as low as reasonably achievable
- *As asymptomatic individuals* can spread the disease, when applying precautionary measures everyone should be considered to potentially be infected

2 Administration

2.1 Campus Access

Access to campus will continue to be available to those who require it from 7 a.m. until 8 p.m. daily. Outside of these times the facilities will be locked. The only change is that the number of unlocked exterior entrances will be limited to (subject to change): the Riddell Centre (West doors); Ad Hum (North doors); Research Innovation Center loading dock; Innovation Place; Maintenance Building or Education Building (South doors) **only**. Student employees, supported by campus security, will be stationed at main campus locations to ensure those entering have reason to be there. Please bring your University or government-issued identification.

2.2 Required Health and Safety Training

A **COVID-19 Health and Safety** training course has been developed for researchers participating in essential research, pre-approved research, equipment maintenance or animal care. Users at this time must have received appropriate training before working in the lab and field, including applicable University of Regina training (Biosafety, Chemical and Laboratory Safety, WHMIS, Animal, etc.) and site-specific training from supervisors.

For more information or assistance, contact Health Safety and Wellness at Health.Safety@uregina.ca or visit <https://www.uregina.ca/hr/hsw/>. For COVID-19 specific questions please see the updated University of Regina COVID-19 page: <https://www.uregina.ca/covid-19/>.

2.3 Working Alone and Afterhours Plans

Working Alone refers to any time a worker or student is alone on a worksite or is working in circumstances where assistance is not readily available to the worker or student in the event of injury, ill health, or emergency. Working afterhours refers to any work done outside of normal business hours.

During the conditions of federal, provincial or local restrictions there are **no normal business hours** and working alone cannot be avoided. All researchers must implement a working alone plan into all planned activities during this time. This plan must be reviewed with all workers and students (virtual meeting is encouraged).

Recommended items for a Working Alone/After hours plan:

- Communications Plan – contact numbers, alternate contacts, check-in intervals.
- Work Scheduling – determine work locations, durations, supervision and alternate supervision.
- Job Safety Analysis – determine allowable/prohibited activities, task hazards and mitigation strategies.

3 Updated Emergency Response

3.1 Create and Review contingency plans and emergency procedures

Creating or reviewing contingency plans and emergency procedures for each research group will help avoid unnecessary stress in the future. Please take the time to create/review emergency contingency plans for the individual research group. Recommended parts of a contingency plan:

- Maintain an updated list of everyone who works in the lab, research facility, or field.
 - Include home and cell phone numbers and ensure access to the information even while away from the lab.
 - Create a phone tree or email group to facilitate emergency communication amongst research personnel.
- Cross-train personnel to fill in for others who may be out sick or unable to come to work.
- Consider documenting either via video or written documentation critical step-by step instructions.
- Coordinate with colleagues who have similar research activities to identify ways to ensure coverage of critical activities or sharing of personnel.
- Communicate significant planned absences and/or lab closures to your PI/Lab Manager/Project Lead designee. Maintain a system to know the whereabouts of all members.

Recognize that events like these can cause anxiety and emotional strain and your colleagues may be dealing with other difficult situations outside of work. Please visit <https://www.uregina.ca/covid-19/resources/mental-wellness-support.html> for more information and to learn about all options available to members of the University of Regina community.

3.2 Incident Reporting

Faculty, staff or students involved in an incident, spill or near miss incident while engaged in activities at, or while conducting work for the university, shall adhere to the following incident response and reporting processes.

The individuals involved in the incident are responsible to:

- Seek appropriate medical attention. In a medical emergency, call 911;
 - Notify Campus Security of medical personnel on campus; they will coordinate access to the emergency scene;
- Notify their supervisor as soon as possible;
- Contact Health Safety & Wellness in the event of a spill;
- Complete an incident report within 24 hours via instructions found on the HSW website: <https://www.uregina.ca/hr/hsw/>
- Notify your faculty representative.

4 Health Safety & Wellness

Health Safety & Wellness is working both on campus and remotely to keep supports up and running with limited disruptions. During these unprecedented times it is imperative to focus on individual worker safety. This includes conducting ONLY preapproved research and following all health and safety procedures already put in place by the University of Regina.

4.1 HSW Services Available

- Permit Amendments and Regulatory approvals (BioSafety and Radiation)
- Online training
- Procedure, work practice and risk assessment guidance
- Must be notified and will provide consultation on work refusals in partnership with OHC/Supervisor/PI/Student
- Ergonomic assessments and Transferring, Lifting and Repositioning training
- Workspace visits to assist with identifying and mitigating hazards
- Hazardous Waste Management service – See Hazardous Waste Disposal page on HSW website
 - Chemical, biological, radiation, glass and sharps waste management continue as requested.
- Additional services available as requested to Health.Safety@uregina.ca

5 Safe Work Practices

Avoid unnecessary meetings and limit personal interactions. Two-meter distancing between individuals in the workplace shall be maintained unless it is not possible for safety reasons (ex. Two person lifts). Operations can be altered or postponed to maintain distancing such as postponing work or working in shifts. Unnecessarily working in close quarters or choosing to ignore social distancing measures puts all workers at risk.

The Government of Saskatchewan encourages all workers who become ill (cold, flu, etc.) to stay home and self-monitor for symptoms.

The following must occur:

1. Stay home if you are feeling unwell
2. If you fall ill at work, leave the workplace
3. Inform supervisor of illness
4. Sick employees work stations must be disinfected along with all communal surfaces as soon as possible

5.1 Special Requirements During COVID-19

All research must follow the additional requirements during the COVID-19 Pandemic:

1. You may not enter unless you are authorized to use the laboratory or field;
2. If you are sick, do not enter the lab or field. You should not be at the workplace;
3. Ensure you are thoroughly handwashing before enter and before leaving the laboratory and field;
4. Maintain a distance of two meters between all workers on a bench or in a closed space at any given time;
5. Ensure you clean up completely and store materials before leaving the lab, avoid all temporary storage or conditions that may require intervention;
6. Ensure appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) is available prior to starting any research activity. If adequate PPE is not available, do not conduct the activity;
7. Prepare a contingency plan in case access is severely restricted to laboratories/field areas or are shut down for a prolonged period of time. Discuss this with all personnel.

5.2 Personal Hygiene

Personal hygiene is critical for the continuation of work during the COVID-19 pandemic. Please adhere to the following practices:

- Practice social distancing at work
 - Avoid handshakes and any other physical contact with others;
 - Remain two meters apart from others whenever possible;
 - Do not leave assigned work spaces for unnecessary walks throughout the campus;
 - If possible, avoid taking the elevator, or, ride alone. Be courteous in stairwells, such as allowing others to pass in stairwell junctions.
- Follow proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette including:
 - Wash your back of hands, palms, nails, etc. often with soap and water. Scrub for 20 seconds;
 - Use hand sanitizer when hands are not visibly dirty and handwashing is not available;
 - Only use hand sanitizer approved by Health Canada (Look for DIN or NPN on bottle);
 - Avoid touching your face, mouth, nose, and eyes;
 - Cover your coughs and sneezes, then wash hands with soap and water;
 - Wash hands after touching communal surfaces, computers, door knobs, pens, etc.;
 - Avoid sharing office supplies, if not feasible thoroughly disinfect between each person's use.

The following are general hygiene practices that shall be followed by all individuals working/learning in laboratory environments in addition to the COVID-19 specific conditions listed above:

- Follow laboratory access procedures and PPE requirements;
- Do not smoke (includes e-cigarettes), drink, chew gum, eat or store food or drinks in any laboratory where hazardous materials are handled or stored;
- Avoid contacting yourself with contaminated hands;
- Wash hands regularly after removing PPE and before leaving the laboratory, and before eating, drinking, smoking or going to the washroom. Use soap and water and wash for a minimum of 20 seconds;
- Practice good housekeeping - regularly wash/decontaminate work surfaces;
- Do not wear laboratory coats or protective clothing outside laboratory areas;
- Immediately report to your supervisor if you have been exposed to hazardous materials, or if you are experiencing adverse medical symptoms that may have resulted from work activities in the laboratory.

5.3 Cleaning and Disinfection in the Lab/Workspace

The COVID-19 virus can survive for several days on different surfaces and objects. Frequent cleaning and disinfection is important to prevent spread of the disease.

- Workplaces must implement enhanced environmental cleaning. Commonly touched areas and shared equipment must be cleaned and disinfected at least twice daily, or when visibly soiled.
- Wherever possible, discourage workers from sharing phones, desks, offices, and other tools and equipment.
- Commonly touched areas include light switches, doorknobs, toilets, taps, handrails, countertops, touch screens/mobile devices and keyboards must be cleaned and disinfected between uses.
- Clothing and fabric items must be laundered and dried on the highest temperature setting possible. Ensure items are thoroughly dried.
- Additional research may need to be conducted to determine if specific surfaces and equipment are compatible with disinfectants used.

Common disinfectants include bleach solutions, quaternary ammonium (QUAT), alcohol (>65%) and peroxide. Vinegar, tea tree oil solutions, etc. are not proven to be effective disinfectants. Only products with an NPN or DIN have been approved by Health Canada. OxivirTb (accelerated hydrogen peroxide) wipes are available at UR Stores (RIC 110 and GG 119). Store information can be found <https://www.uregina.ca/fs/sms/sciencestores/index.html>.

Custodial services may be reduced or inactive. If re-activation of custodial services is required contact the custodial team lead for the applicable building (Joe McCabe – RIC/LB, Jo-Anne Sali – GG/ED). Custodial services will coordinate cleaning times around workspace activity periods.

5.4 Travel and Fieldwork considerations

For activities involving travel or fieldwork, PIs/Researchers/Supervisors must complete appropriate UofR *Travel and Field Work Risk Assessment and Procedures* (part of the Financial Services' *Travel Authorization Form*) to ensure all travel risks are appropriately assessed and controlled. More information can be found here: <https://www.uregina.ca/hr/hsw/travel-fieldwork/index.html>

Consider alterations to response plans, reporting, or procedures for isolated/field work for COVID-19 circumstances. This may include:

- Self-monitoring of symptoms in the field
- Procedures for halting work safely should symptoms arise
- Identification of closest emergency services to work site
- Travel/vehicle accommodations to ensure social distancing, or appropriate controls when social distancing is not possible
- Enhanced cleaning/disinfecting procedures for vehicles and materials (See 5.3)
- Plan and train for disinfecting procedures (handwashing, hand sanitizer) for contacts with public services (gas stations, service industries or sites occupied by the public)
- Working alone plans as stated above

5.5 Personal Health Surveillance

To prevent the spread of COVID-19, faculty, staff, and students who are working on campus during this time are recommended to self-monitor for the development of COVID-19 symptoms. The COVID-19 Self-Monitoring Checklist (see page 10) should be filled in daily by all workers, kept for future reference and all symptoms reported to supervisors.

If workers are returning from international travel, develop any symptoms, or come in contact with anyone who tests positive for COVID-19, they will be required to self-isolate. Self-isolation means they are required to stay home and avoid contact with others.

COVID-19 Self-Monitoring Checklist

This form serves as a personal health checklist to monitor for the development of COVID-19 symptoms in an effort to prevent its spread. Workers must fill out this form daily to monitor for symptoms of COVID-19. Supervisors can request this form from employees, as required. If workers are returning from international travel, develop any symptoms, or come in contact with anyone who tests positive for COVID-19, they will be required to self-isolate. Self-isolation means they are required to stay home and avoid contact with others.

Self-isolation is required in the following circumstances and for the following durations:

- Once a worker has returned from international travel, they are required to self-isolate and monitor for symptoms for 14 days
- If a worker develops any symptoms, they are required to self-isolate until:
 - It has been at least 14 days since symptoms started
 - It has been at least 72 hours since the individual had a fever
 - All other symptoms have improved
- If a worker has come in contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19 but the worker has NOT developed any symptoms, they are required to self-isolate for 14 days from their last contact with the COVID-19 case.
- If a worker has come in contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19 and the worker DOES develop symptoms, they are required to self-isolate until:
 - It has been at least 14 days since symptoms started
 - It has been at least 72 hours since the individual had a fever
 - All other symptoms have improved

If self-isolation is required, the individual must inform their supervisor as soon as possible. **Do not attempt to visit campus if you are having any symptoms or until your self-isolation period is complete.**

If you require medical assistance, call the Saskatchewan Government's Healthline 8-1-1.

Daily Self-Monitoring Form for COVID-19 Symptoms

Name: _____

Day	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Date														
Symptoms	Pay close attention to your health. Each day, check for symptoms below and answer yes or no for each.													
No Symptoms														
Chills														
Conjunctivitis (pink eye)														
Cough														
Diarrhea (loose stools)														
Fatigue (tired)														
Fever														
Sore throat														
Runny nose														
Shortness of breath/Difficulty breathing														
Other (add in notes)														

Notes: