

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HEALTH AND SAFETY PROTOCOLS FOR FIELD TRIPS

The Ad-Hoc Instructional Task Force strongly recommends the adoption of the following health and safety protocols for field trips:

### Traveling by bus or van

Transporting multiple people in a bus or van creates increased risk of coronavirus transmission because of difficulties associated with (1) maintaining proper social distancing, (2) time spent in an enclosed air space, and (3) keeping surfaces disinfected. To minimize risk, students are encouraged to provide their own transportation to field trips to other ECU properties. When university vehicles must be used, the following guidelines should be followed:

#### *Vehicle Preparation*

- Seats will be marked to indicate places where students may and may not sit during travel to and from the field trip.
- All vehicles are stocked with disposable gloves, surgical facemasks, and cleaning and EPA-approved disinfecting supplies. The department will make sure that these items are resupplied after each field trip.

#### *Driver/Instructor*

For each trip, the drivers will use the largest available vehicle (or a large number of vehicles) so that passengers can maintain greater physical distance from one another. The vehicles designed capacity will be reduced to the extent required by current REDE guidelines: (“ECU Guidelines for Fieldwork in the COVID-19 Pandemic 4.c” available at <https://rede.ecu.edu/covid-ramp-up/>)

- All field trip participants will self-screen before each field trip.
  - A symptoms checklist will be available in each vehicle’s key packet and on the department web site. Faculty who teach courses that include field trips are encouraged to include a link to the checklist in their course materials.
  - A symptoms checklist (kept in the key packet for each vehicle) will be filled out by the driver before each field trip.
  - The driver will screen student’s temperature before leaving campus.
  - The faculty member in charge of the trip will review and collect all symptoms checklists prior to leaving campus. Any student with positive symptoms will be excluded from travel.
  - Drivers with COVID-19 symptoms will not be allowed to operate the vehicle or join the field trip.
- Driver will wash/sanitize hands before entering the vehicle.
- Drivers should wear face masks and appropriate (disposable) gloves when operating vehicles, maintain physical distance by limiting interaction with passengers while driving. When safe to do so, driver will open windows prior to passenger boarding.
- If this is not possible to leave the windows open during travel, leave them open an inch, and always put the air on fresh *not* recirculate.

#### *Field Trip Participants/Students*

- Whenever possible, students are encouraged to provide their own transportation to field trips to other ECU facility.
- Occupy the same seats throughout the field trip and remove all personal gear when exiting the vehicle.
- Practice good hygiene: if you are going to cough or sneeze, bend down toward the floor and cough or sneeze into your elbow or a tissue; avoid touching your mouth, nose, and eyes.

- Maintain physical distance by maximizing distance between yourself and other passengers.
- Avoid touching surfaces on the bus/van.
- Wear a facemask covering the nose and mouth while riding in the vehicle or anytime you are likely to come within 6' of another person.
- When exiting the vehicle, remove all belongings and discard all waste.
- When re-boarding the vehicle, sit in the same seat, or your assigned seat, each time.
- All field trip participants (*including those using their own vehicles to get to the field location*) will self-screen before each field trip.
  - Each student will fill out a symptoms checklist prior to each field trip – on the day of the trip.
  - The faculty member in charge of the trip will ensure that all participants have their temperatures measured before leaving campus.
  - Sick individuals, and any person experiences any of the symptoms on the checklist, are required to stay home and will not be allowed in to participate in the field trip. The course instructor will provide alternative work assignment(s) for anyone who is not allowed on the trip.
- All field trip participants (*including drivers and including those using their own vehicles to get to the field location*) are trained in proper hand washing procedures.
- All trip participants must wash hands before entering the vehicle.
- All field trip participants (*including drivers*) are trained in sanitizing procedures and will have access to alcohol-based hand sanitizer and face masks for use during the field trip.

### *Cleaning and Disinfecting*

- Commonly touched surfaces in vehicles will be cleaned and disinfected (using disinfectant wipes or spray) between uses.
- Disposable gloves and a facemask will be worn during cleaning.
- Hard non-porous surfaces will be disinfected using one of the following products:
  - [EPA Registered Antimicrobial Products for Use Against Novel Coronavirus SARS-CoV-2](#)
  - Diluted household bleach products. Add 5 tablespoons (1/3 cup) of bleach to a gallon of water or 4 teaspoons of bleach to a quart of water. Do not use bleach solutions in conjunction with ammonia-based solutions.
  - Alcohol-based solutions containing at least 70% alcohol.
  - If soft or porous surfaces (*e.g.*, fabric seats, upholstery, carpets) are visibly dirty, they will be cleaned using appropriate cleaners and then disinfect soft or porous surfaces using [EPA Registered Antimicrobial Products for Use Against Novel Coronavirus SARS-CoV-2](#).
- If frequently touched electronic surfaces (*e.g.*, cabin controls, touch screens, lights) are visibly dirty, they will be cleaned using products appropriate for use on electronics. Electronic surfaces will be disinfected with alcohol-based solutions containing at least 70% alcohol. “Care must be taken to avoid getting any liquid inside electronic components.
- Immediately after cleaning and disinfecting (and before taking any breaks from cleaning), dispose of gloves in a sealable trash bag or container and wash or disinfect hands using proper procedures.

### **Remote field trip that requires lodging and/or long-term stays.**

Field trips that require long-term stays must adhere to current REDE guidelines: (“ECU Guidelines for Fieldwork in the COVID-19 Pandemic 7” available at <https://rede.ecu.edu/covid-ramp-up/>)

### **General Guidance for Field Activities**

Weather permitting, outdoor activities are always preferable to indoor activities because risk of COVID-19 is lower outside than inside. Even so, participants in field work must take precautions to reduce the risk of COVID-19 exposure and spread among field trip participants and others.

The following provides guidance and procedures to reduce COVID-19 exposure risk to students, faculty, and staff while participating in activities typical in field trips. The list of activities covered here is not exhaustive. To reduce COVID-19 risk during other types of activities, it may be possible to apply minimal changes to existing guidance. All field trip activities should be limited to those in which physical distancing and proper hygiene can be practiced.

**IMPORTANT:** During all field activities, including field trips for classes and field work with student researchers, faculty must be empowered to enforce procedures (*e.g.*, hand washing/sanitizing, wearing face masks, social distancing, etc.) during all field activities.

- Contact with public outside the field team should be minimized, both during transit and at the field site. When public contact is a required component of the trip, a safety plan should be designed to protect all parties.
- Field trip groups must be appropriately small.
- All team members should bring ample water/liquids and food for themselves in clearly labelled bottles and containers. No sharing of drinks or food will be allowed.
- Face masks must be worn at all times during travel by car, van, or bus.
- During field tasks, eye protection is required if there is potential contact with another individual's sweat or other secretions.
- Students and faculty must practice physical distancing and wear either cloth or surgical face masks during outdoor activities.
- All field trip participants must practice proper hand hygiene.
- All shared items and equipment must be properly cleaned and disinfected between each use.
- All attempts should be made to limit the quantity of shared supplies and equipment. When possible, shared supplies and equipment will be limited by requiring each student to have their own supplies and assigning needed equipment to each student for the duration of the field trip.
- When it is necessary to share equipment, that equipment should be limited to items that can be effectively cleaned between uses by different individuals (*e.g.*, equipment with hard, non-porous handles is preferred to equipment with soft, porous handles).
- Sharing of storage space for personal items must be kept to a minimum; all shared storage spaces and equipment must be disinfected between group use.
- Students must be required to bring their own food, water, and water bottles.
- Students and faculty must practice hand hygiene prior to/following any field activities. If clean, running water is not available, ensure hand sanitizer must be available to the group.
- Efforts to maintain physical distancing should not impact existing safety protocols (*e.g.*, first aid, CPR, etc.). If emergency care is needed and physical distancing cannot be maintained, normal emergency procedures should be followed, and trip leader should consider guidance for first responders and victims from CDC, National Safety Council, and American Red Cross.

### *Small Craft Activities*

There is no current evidence that COVID-19 can be spread to people through the water in water play areas. The main risk in water-related activities remains exposure through too-close contact with infected individuals.

Field trips that require the use of vessels will follow current REDE guidelines: (“ECU Guidelines for Fieldwork in the COVID-19 Pandemic 4.d” available at <https://rede.ecu.edu/covid-ramp-up/>).

- Students and faculty must follow physical distancing and proper hand hygiene practices prior to/following any small craft (*e.g.*, individual kayaks, canoes, etc.) or other vessel.
- Capacity on larger vessels must be limited to allow proper physical distancing between passengers.
- All shared and used equipment (*e.g.*, oars, lifejackets, boats) should be cleaned and disinfected between each use. Manufacturer guidelines and/or industry recommendations for the cleaning products and equipment must be followed:
  - The amount of shared supplies and equipment will be limited as much as possible. Hand wash life jackets in hot soapy water. Allow to air dry and spray lifejackets with alcohol-based disinfectant spray. (Better: Use a dryer to ensure complete drying with a temperature set-point not to exceed 140 °F. Spray lifejackets with alcohol-based disinfectant spray before use.)
  - Commonly touched surfaces of boats should be cleaned and disinfected after each use, following the guidance in the *Cleaning and Disinfecting*, below. Do not use bleach products on ropes or lifejackets.

### *Diving and Snorkeling*

If diving and snorkeling are necessary components of the field trip, current REDE guidelines must be followed (“ECU Guidelines for Fieldwork in the COVID-19 Pandemic—Diving and Snorkeling” available at <https://rede.ecu.edu/covid-ramp-up/>)

### *Cleaning and Disinfecting*

To minimize transfer of coronavirus during field trips and thereby reduce the rise to students, staff, and faculty, vehicles should be cleaned following craft-specific protocols, if they exist. Cleaning methods should follow the CDC guidelines, including the recommended two-stage cleaning and disinfecting procedures and the use of EPA-approved disinfecting solutions.

#### Increase the Frequency of Cleaning Communal Spaces

- Good practice: Clean and disinfect communal spaces, equipment, and vehicles at least daily
- Best practice: Clean and disinfect of communal spaces between each use. Disinfection after cleaning may not be feasible if scheduling of activities does not allow for disinfectant to remain on treated surfaces for sufficient time to fully disinfect.

#### Be Careful with Shared Items

- Good practice: Clean and disinfect shared items between uses.
- Best practice: Assign items to individual students to reduce the quantity of items shared. Also, clean and disinfect shared items between uses.

#### Clean All Frequently Touched Surfaces

Examples of frequently touched surfaces include tables, door handles, hand railings, lanterns, flashlights, sample storage containers, phones, laptops, keyboards, etc. Any other surfaces frequently touched by students or faculty should be cleaned and disinfected at least daily or, preferably, several times per day.

- Good practice: Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and common spaces at least daily.
- Best practice: Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and common spaces multiple times daily, especially between each use.

Outdoor structures or equipment made of plastic or metal can be cleaned according to typical cleaning practices (more frequently if needed to remove obvious soiling) and disinfected according to CDC guideline for the particular type of surface.

### **Supplies and Materials for 2020-2021 Field Trip Season**

A potential limiting factor in safely conducting field work is availability of key supplies. Here is an initial list of some important items that are currently in short supply and that are needed to prepare for and operate field trips during the 2020-2021 academic year:

- **Hand soap**—Anticipate an order of approximately 50% more than in a typical academic year.
- **EPA approved cleaners**—<https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-ndisinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>. Work with existing suppliers and cleaning contractors/staff to identify and order cleaners. Be prepared to order multiple brands and product lines. Order approximately 100% more than in a typical academic year.
- **Hand sanitizer supplies and stations**—Anticipate to order 0.5 fl. oz. per participant per day. Example: 100 people on field trips (multiple field trips!) will need approximately 50 fl. oz. per day.
- **Surface cleaning and disinfectant wipes**—Order approximately 100% more than in a typical academic year.
- **Paper towels**—Anticipate an order of approximately 50% more than in a typical academic year.
- **Cleaning spray bottles**—May be needed to dilute, mix, and apply U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approved cleaner. Order 1-3 bottles per vehicle.

### *Emergency Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Supplies*

Departments will need enough for faculty and staff to use when operating vehicles or working in close proximity to others and enough to attend to a Covid-19 symptomatic individual (when needed). The items listed below should be considered a “starter pack” available for when the semester opens. The number of items purchased should be based on the number of faculty members per field trip. The initial onsite supply recommendation per each faculty/staff member includes the following:

- Face masks—5 per faculty/staff member (Note that these must be properly fitted to each individual.)
- Disposable surgical masks—50 per faculty/staff member (Note: do not wear makeup below the eyes when using a face mask and never touch the inside (the clean side) of the mask.)
- Nitrile exam gloves—200 per faculty/staff member
- Disposable safety gowns—50 per faculty/staff member for what?
- Face shields—2 per faculty/staff member
- Covered medical waste disposal bin—1 per vehicle
- Adequate thermometers—2 per faculty/staff member

Ensure that all supplies meet the clinical requirements of the university.

### **POSTERS and SIGNAGE**

- Department faculty should encourage behaviors that mitigate the spread of disease by directing students toward educational poster, signage, and/or websites.
- Relevant posters and signage from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC](#)), World Health Organization ([WHO](#)), and/or other health-based organizations in all labs and classrooms, and posting all relevant information to all course websites. The following posters are useful:
  - [COVID-19 information](#)
  - [Handwashing](#)
  - [Cough etiquette](#)
  - [Symptoms associated with COVID-19](#)
  - [Stop the spread of germs](#)
  - [Physical distancing](#)

## **REFERENCES**

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