



COVID-19 Safety for Laboratory Research Personnel College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

Note: The current COVID-19 pandemic is evolving rapidly. This document is based on current conditions and is subject to frequent change.

Laboratory Research Personnel

The following safe work practices are to be followed by all CSUF Research Laboratory staff employees:

The following document serves as department specific general safe work practice (SWP) document for CSUF research laboratory staff. The following work plan should be used in conjunction with the CSUF General Safe Work Practice document.

Practices to Protect Research Laboratory Personnel

1. Physical Distancing

1.1 Laboratory Research

- a. Occupancy: Research staff and student occupancy will be limited to include one faculty member and maximum of two (2) research students in the laboratory. Any deviation from the number of occupants will need to be discussed with the COVID-19 Safety Coordinator and an appropriate risk assessment performed to determine additional control measures needed. If no faculty member is present, the maximum occupancy will include 2 research students.
- b. Scheduling: It is recommended that individual faculty be responsible for organizing and scheduling the use of their research laboratory such that would limit the number of personnel within the labs. It is important to remember that risk of transmission increases not only with proximity, but also with time. Therefore, it is recommended that length of time in which staff are occupying the same space together be minimized as much as possible.
- c. Access: Laboratory doors will be kept closed and signage placed outside the door to prevent unauthorized individuals from entering the space to assist in maintaining maximum occupancy.
- d. Shared Equipment Rooms (short use area): Signage indicating the room is in use will be placed in locations of shared equipment/work rooms (i.e., darkroom) to restrict access to the area by other staff or students to allow for one individual occupancy. Additional signage will be placed in the space to advise staff and students to maintain physical distance (>6ft) from the door while waiting their turn to use the room.
- e. Shared Equipment Room (extended use area): The faculty will implement an online calendar/scheduling system for shared equipment rooms (e.g., qPCR, plate readers, tissue culture, microscopes) where researchers are required to spend an extended amount of time. Schedules will be coordinated such that one person will occupy the room at a given scheduled time slot. In addition, signage indicating the room is in use will be placed in locations of shared equipment to restrict access to the area by other staff or students.
- f. Lunch/Breaks: Staff and students will maintain social distancing during all lunch and break times. No congregation of employees in common areas will be allowed. **No eating in MH or DBH laboratories, hallways, or common areas to include the DBH atrium. When eating outdoors, please maintain the 6ft social distancing.**

1.2 Outdoor/Field Research

- a. Field Work: In instances where more than one staff is performing field work while on site, employees and/or students will maintain physical distancing (>6ft.). If this is not possible due

to the nature of the field work involved, appropriate PPE, as outlined below, will be donned prior to the work beginning.

- b. Field Site Travel:

- i. Staff shall travel in individual vehicles and not carpool to field sites unless they are members of the same household. Proper physical distancing and personal hygiene protocols must be adhered to during any rest-stops or meal breaks while traveling.
- ii. If travel necessitates extended-stays at off-campus field stations or research facilities, the travel plans and living situations will be reviewed and approved by appropriate personnel including the Project PI prior to departure. All employees must follow the physical distancing and personal hygiene guidelines for all field work and/or work conducted at off-campus research facilities as outlined in this document.
- iii. Access to public spaces, such as beaches, may be restricted by city, state, and federal ordinance, and restrictions must be respected. If working in public, face masks should be worn and physical distancing (>6 ft) maintained. Physical distancing could be encouraged by setting up a temporary perimeter around the work site (e.g., traffic cones, flagging tapes).
- iv. All university vehicles used while traveling to an off-campus field site will be cleaned by the user (faculty, staff, or student approved to drive university vehicles) prior to and after use in accordance with general environmental cleaning and disinfecting protocols as outlined below, giving priority to high-touch, frequently used areas both inside and outside the vehicle using CSUF approved EPA registered disinfectants.
- v. **Field travel requires travel authorization. Please refer to University travel policy.**

- c. Research Boat:

- i. Staff and students shall travel in individual vehicles and not carpool to the location where the boat is docked or will be launched unless they are members of the same household. Proper physical distancing and personal hygiene protocols must be adhered to during any rest-stops or meal breaks while traveling.
- ii. No more than two (2) research staff should be on the CSUF vessel or other small vessel at one time in order to maintain physical distancing.
- iii. Face masks and gloves must be worn at all times while on the vessel.
- iv. Upon return to the dock, handrails and frequently touched surfaces must be cleaned with CSUF approved EPA registered disinfectants and paper towels as outlined below. Used paper towels must be sealed in Ziploc bags and returned the laboratory and disposed appropriately.
- v. Divers on the boat deck must always maintain physical distancing between dives. All dive equipment (e.g., regulators, masks) must be covered with a towel between dives and stored in large plastic tubs with a cover to reduce contamination. When not wearing a dive mask, divers must wear face masks and maintain physical distance

when prepping for and completing a dive. Dive equipment will be cleaned and disinfected following the completion of the dive and prior to storing.

2. Personal Hygiene

- a. Gloves will be donned prior to beginning any work tasks. Gloves should be removed and discarded, at a minimum, as follows:
 - i. During lunch and break times
 - ii. When gloves appear ripped or damaged
 - iii. When a contaminated surface is touched and before touching other “clean” areas
 - iv. When leaving the laboratory or work area
 - v. Once the work shift is over
- b. Hands should be cleaned (hand washing or hand sanitizing) before putting on gloves, and after taking them off.
- c. Only necessary personal items (e.g., cellphones, wallets, water bottles, if normally permitted) should be brought to the laboratory/work area as deemed necessary. If items are used during the work shift, such items should be properly cleaned and disinfected.

3. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE): Laboratory personnel should use appropriate PPE pertaining to the experimental procedures performed. Laboratory supervisors shall acquire appropriate PPE from EHS taking into consideration the addition of the following:

- a. Gloves. Research laboratories will be stocked with disposable gloves. The PIs shall monitor the supply and restocking of gloves in the laboratories as needed. All typical laboratory safety rules shall be observed in regard to donning of appropriate gloves while performing experimental procedures to prevent chemical exposure or the contamination of experimental materials (e.g., cell cultures). Gloves must be impermeable to body fluids. Generally, nitrile disposable gloves are adequate for COVID-19. Reusable gloves are acceptable and must be cleaned/disinfected after use.
- b. Masks. Research staff will be provided surgical or cloth masks by EHS. The masks must cover the nose and mouth. Masks are required to be worn by anyone in a public space to include hallways, elevators, stairwells, restrooms **and the DBH public atrium**. Masks are also required in lab spaces when six feet of physical distancing can't be maintained. In instances where physical distancing can't be maintained due to work tasks and a respirator is used (e.g. KN95), a project specific safe work practice will need to be created.
- c. Safety Glasses/Goggles/Face Shields. Safety glasses/goggles are adequate for limited close contact with people (<6 ft.). Face shields are better for more frequent close contact. Safety glasses/goggles and face shields must be cleaned/disinfected after use.
- d. Lab Coats. Research staff will be provided with lab coats and shall observe the standard laboratory (e.g., BSL-2 rules) regarding their use. Lab coats must be worn inside laboratories and other research spaces and removed upon leaving the research workspace. Lab coats must be removed and placed in a designated laundry bag/container for subsequent laundering off site by a 3rd party vendor. The frequency of laundering of lab coats will be based upon the evaluation by the PI.

4. Environmental Cleaning/Disinfection

- a. Sharing of equipment or supplies is discouraged during a single work shift. If deemed necessary, appropriate cleaning and disinfection of the item(s) must be performed prior to and after use.
- b. At the start and end of the work shift, equipment, apparatus, workstations (e.g. work bench, computer keyboards/mouse), frequently touched surfaces and common areas (e.g. freezer/refrigerator/incubator handles, faucets, fume hood sash) within the lab must be cleaned and disinfected by research personnel prior to commencement of research activities. Additional cleaning efforts by custodial staff will be performed regularly in the surrounding spaces as well.
- d. Equipment located in the shared equipment rooms must be cleaned and disinfected prior to use and after each use by research personnel using the space.
- e. Cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces outside of the lab space (i.e., office space) will be performed by custodial staff. The department may request the cleaning of high touch surfaces in the non-lab areas by the custodial staff (per custodial cleaning checklist). Cleaning of personal items and areas (i.e., desks) should also be performed by staff daily.
- f. All cleaning and disinfecting products utilized on site will be provided by EHS and must be CSUF approved EPA registered disinfectants. The product safety data sheets (SDS) must be referred to regarding product information, how to use properly, and important safety precautions (e.g., PPE).

5. Communication and Training

- a. Prior to reinstatement of research activities, all employees and students must complete required COVID-19 health and safety training. The training will include general safe work practices for all staff as well as department specific safe work practices.