

Guidelines for Field Research Activities during the COVID-19 Pandemic

During the COVID-19 pandemic, UTK and UTIA personnel may continue to conduct field research activities as long as guidelines for reducing risk and exposure to COVID-19 are followed and do not conflict with current state, federal and international travel restrictions. Field research activities, including travel, should be suspended in localities that have declared a shelter in place order in response to COVID-19 community spread. Planned routes of travel to and from field locations should be developed to either circumvent these areas or minimize encounters with the general public and local authorities while transiting through.

Personnel conducting field research should consult with their department head and associate dean for research to decide which studies are necessary and which studies can be postponed. If field travel is deemed necessary, researchers must submit a plan for review before field activities commence that recognizes and incorporates current health-safety guidelines. For approved field research activities, personnel must practice social distancing for all activities, including travel to and from the research field site. Personnel should also work with a partner if at all possible and inform their supervisor of their location and when they will return.

Researchers should strongly consider delaying all field research activities involving contacts with multiple people (e.g., field work in towns, cities and other high population density areas, visits to archives, libraries, museums, public exhibits, art galleries, any in-person polling of the public, etc.) that cannot be successfully carried out while following [CDC COVID-19 guidelines](#).

The following planning and preparation recommendations to minimize risks should be followed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Continue to monitor federal and state orders with respect to access and keep current on updated UTK COVID-19 information and support: <https://www.utk.edu/coronavirus/>
- Maintain robust communication to receive updates or get assistance; maintain a frequent check in schedule.
- For overnight trips, ensure extra lodging is available to maintain social distancing, i.e. single rooms, single tents.
- Even for small groups, discuss transportation options to maintain social distancing; avoid public transportation and other venues that may conflict with CDC guidelines.
- Blend traveling in vehicles and maintaining social distancing practices will be complex; so please be thoughtful about approaches to minimize exposure and risks.
- If field research activities include the need to request vehicle(s) from UT Fleet Management, please contact fleetmanagement@utk.edu once the plan has been approved.

Plan for Research Fieldwork

Name: _____ Date: _____

Department/College: _____

Email: _____

Cell phone number: _____

Names of other field team members (identify which are students):

Location of Fieldwork:

Purpose of Fieldwork:

Approval of field site owners (private/state/federal) to perform field work activities:

Yes ___ Email/Written Approval Attached: ___

No ___ If no, please explain: _____

Why is it necessary to continue fieldwork during the COVID-19 pandemic?

What steps will be taken to mitigate risk of COVID-19 exposure?

Itinerary (Locations, arrival, departure dates):

Contact information for field personnel:

Emergency contact information:

Local contacts – Names of people at or near your fieldwork site who can reach you if necessary and are familiar with check-in and checkout arrangements:

Routing Workflow*

Department Head recommendation:

Dean/Associate Dean recommendation:

*If research activity is moved from its current reduced state to an essential-only state in the future, essential work will need additional approval by the Vice Chancellor for Research. At this time, that is not required.