

Utah Water Research Laboratory COVID-19 Operations Plan

September 4, 2020

This Operation Plan provides specific guidance for employees of the Utah Water Research Laboratory (UWRL) as we transition back to on-site operations. These guidelines are designed to minimize the risk of exposure to faculty, students, employees, and the public. This plan will remain in place until USU sends notification regarding the lifting of COVID-19 limitations and the return to a “new normal.”

Guiding Principles

1. Follow USU, Local, and State Public Health authority directives.
2. Protect the health and safety of the UWRL community.
3. Recognize the uncertainty and evolving nature of the COVID-19 situation, and promote a culture of informed individual and collective responsibility for safety in the UWRL.
4. Remain productively engaged in research.

The COVID-19 epidemic and response to it is uncertain and evolving rapidly. Public health guidance cannot anticipate every unique situation. Uncertain and conflicting messages are likely to arise from leadership at various levels as leaders struggle with how to respond. A response to uncertainty is information. Everyone should stay informed by following credible news and authoritative recommendations such as those from the CDC, State, and University and act with common sense and wise judgment to take personal responsibility for the safety of themselves and others around them. Here are some information sources:

- Coronavirus (COVID-19) Information for Utah State University <http://www.usu.edu/COVID-19>
- USU Research COVID-19 Website <https://research.usu.edu/covid19/>
- State of Utah <https://coronavirus.utah.gov/utah-leads-together/>
- Utah System of Higher Education COVID-19 updated <https://ushe.edu/ushe-covid-19/>
- Center for Disease Control and Prevention <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

This UWRL operations plan does not supersede USU policies, rather it should be used in conjunction with these policies and is intended to give specific UWRL plans consistent with these policies.

Work Schedules for Employees

1. Work from home (telework/remote work) is allowed and encouraged for anyone who can do so effectively or who is at high-risk or caring for someone who is high-risk.
2. Supervisors and employees will coordinate schedules for work from home and work on-site.
3. Employees with their own single-occupancy offices may work on site.
4. Physical distancing will be required for employees and student teams who work in shared offices, workspaces, and laboratories. Office set ups will incorporate a physical barrier or at least 6 ft. of separation between workstations, and employees will not be located adjacent to or facing each other. Supervisors are encouraged to arrange for employees in shared work spaces to stagger work schedules to maximize physical distancing.
5. The Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) developed by each Faculty member, Principal Investigator, and/or laboratory lead, will address specific details of physical distancing and work hour staggering in the shared work areas for which they have responsibility.

Employee Safety Guidelines

1. All employees will follow USU's COVID-19 hygiene standards. These include washing hands frequently and/or using hand sanitizer; avoiding touching their eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands; and covering coughs and sneezes. Please refer to more details at <https://www.usu.edu/covid-19/staying-healthy/prevention>.
2. Employees are required to wear a face covering in accordance with USU face coverings guidelines <https://www.usu.edu/covid-19/staying-healthy/face-coverings>. The UWRL will provide two face coverings for each employee, available from the UWRL receptionist. Additional face coverings are available via USU, the State of Utah, and for purchase. The receptionist will maintain a supply of disposable face masks for visitors or anyone who does not have one.
3. Face coverings are required when in public areas in the UWRL (common areas, hallways, restrooms, break rooms, or other spaces where employees may pass or interact at close distance), when visiting other employees' offices, or anywhere where 6-ft social distancing is difficult to maintain.
4. Face coverings are not required when an employee is alone in his/her own office.
5. Some individuals may not be able to use a face covering due to medical conditions, including those that make it hard to breathe with a face covering. These individuals must maintain proper physical distancing of 6 feet or more at all times.
6. Individuals who are not able to wear a face covering or mask due to a medical condition and need a work accommodation, should talk to their supervisor or contact the ADA Coordinator in Human Resources. These situations will be addressed on a case-by-case basis. Students unable to wear a face covering or needing an accommodation should contact the USU Disability Resource Center.
7. Meetings will be scheduled in spaces that facilitate physical distancing and/or will occur remotely using web-conferencing tools.
8. Employees are encouraged to use email and/or messaging services like Slack for coordination and communication of activities and schedules to minimize in-person meetings.

Facility Protocols to Protect Employees

1. **Employees who feel sick or experience any COVID-19 symptoms should isolate themselves immediately.** Stay away from others, leave, and return home or to a safe place and seek medical care. Refer to <https://www.usu.edu/covid-19/if-you-are-sick/>.
2. UWRL employees should inform their supervisor and USU risk management (risk@usu.edu) of any development of symptoms or results of monitoring and testing for COVID-19 and act on the advice received.
3. Supervisors who receive information on COVID-19 symptoms or positive test outcomes from their employees should inform USU risk management (risk@usu.edu) and act on the advice received.
4. USU-approved COVID-19 signage that lists COVID-19 symptoms will be posted at entrances to the UWRL.
5. Cleaning supplies have been obtained and will be resupplied, working with facilities, for cleaning high-touch surfaces in our work areas.
 - a. Employees should wipe down their respective workstations daily.
 - b. Conference Rooms are to be used by reservation only to facilitate and encourage cleaning protocols and responsible usage.
 - c. Conference tables and chair arms will be wiped down by the meeting host prior to and at the conclusion of the meeting using supplies available in the conference rooms.
 - d. Appropriate notices will be posted in each conference room and meeting place with room capacity and respiratory hygiene and etiquette guidelines.
 - e. Conference rooms will be limited to the following numbers of people to facilitate physical distancing: Third floor: 10 people, Mezzanine: 4 people, First Floor: 4 people
6. Reception area staff will work behind a plexiglass barrier to conduct business.
7. Chairs in the reception area will be located more than 6-ft apart.
8. Unless it creates a privacy, data security, fire, or other security risk, internal doors will be propped open to increase ventilation and avoid the use of door handles.

Travel

1. Travel is allowed following USU travel guidelines: <https://www.usu.edu/covid-19/operations/travel/>.
2. All USU travelers are required to submit a Travel Authorization (TA) and, upon the completion of their travel, to complete the USU Travel Questionnaire (https://usu.servicenow.com/usu/catalog_item.do?sysparm_id=9a76164bdbcd58d09bd3dfff6489619a9) that documents the locations visited and the duration of stay in each location.
3. Completion of the travel questionnaire is requested for personal travel.
4. UWRL travelers should, as part of their TA request, include comments or attach a document that addresses: (1) the time sensitive purpose of the travel (why this travel is needed now and cannot be postponed, e.g. to collect data that would otherwise be lost or for an unavoidable in person meeting); (2) the traveler's plans for safety during travel (physical distancing, vehicle occupancy, accommodation and meals); (3) the COVID-19 risk in the location being visited or transited. (e.g., from the case calculation tool <https://colab.research.google.com/drive/1FUJ10k0i9EME6YZXX3CzPKgohGyKX?usp=sharing> for the county you are visiting or other equivalent information); (4) Plans for alternate work from home arrangements or self-quarantine for the two weeks following return if USU risk

management designates that this is required. Travelers should check with USU risk management (risk@usu.edu) just prior to the trip, to assess the need for self-quarantine upon return.

5. UWRL Vehicle Use:
 - Face coverings are required in USU vehicles when riding with others (see <https://www.usu.edu/covid-19/staying-healthy/face-coverings>)
 - For longer trips, separate vehicles should be used if at all possible.
 - To facilitate the use of separate vehicles, if a research project is unable to pay for the extra expenses incurred through use of multiple vehicles, the PI may request funding as needed to support the additional vehicle costs. The UWRL will provide funding for the extra vehicle costs from WA-2.3 (Travel). Approval of these additional expenses below \$200 is automatic. Approval of additional travel expenses above \$200 should be obtained in advance by emailing the director.
 - UWRL vehicles will be disinfected between each use according to the UWRL Vehicle Disinfection Plan (see <https://uwrl.usu.edu/covid/vehicle-cleaning>).

Field Work

The UWRL COVID-19 or Other Infectious Disease General Field Safety Plan (<https://uwrl.usu.edu/covid/field-safety-plan>) describes UWRL field safety protocols specific to COVID-19 safety.

1. All field work should be conducted following the field activity and sampling (if any) procedures developed by the PI as part of their standard operations.
2. Field activities should be reviewed in advance by the field team and adjusted or adapted to address physical distance, mask wearing and tool handling needs. Plans should address needs for, and minimization of, tool and equipment sharing (e.g., one employee operates a field computer, while the other installs sensors and dataloggers).
3. Any member of the field team may veto a field activity plan without penalty if they feel it will be unsafe.
4. Project leaders may not override disagreement with a field activity plan and should continue to work with the field team until all agree it is safe before heading into the field.
5. Before beginning field work, all parties should confirm that no team member is currently exhibiting or has been experiencing COVID symptoms within the last 14 days. Refer to <https://www.usu.edu/covid-19/staying-healthy/prevention> as a reference for common COVID symptoms.
6. While in the field, team members will strive to maintain at least 6 feet of distance between individuals. If work requires contact closer than 6 feet, then project-specific PPE—at a minimum face covering—must be worn. Work closer than 6 feet should be minimized to the extent possible.
7. While in the field, employees will wear cloth face coverings consistent with USU's guidance on face coverings at <https://www.usu.edu/covid-19/staying-healthy/face-coverings>.
8. While working in the field, team members should sanitize their hands frequently (before and after each set of tasks, especially if using equipment that may subsequently be used by someone else). PI's or field team leads are to ensure that sufficient hand sanitizing supplies are available.
9. Any additional COVID-19 specific procedures needed for field work should be described in Standard Operating Procedures developed by faculty and research team leads to augment this document and existing (pre-COVID) Field Safety Protocols that are already in place.

Visitors, Meetings and Events

1. Visitors to the UWRL will be limited to those who have official business (e.g., deliveries, project-related work, etc.). Invited guests traveling to the UWRL from other areas/states/countries will need to be pre-approved (see <https://uwrl.usu.edu/covid/visitor-info>) by the UWRL Director before they are formally invited to the UWRL. Employees should, in their request to the director for approval of a visitor from outside of Cache Valley, review and consider the COVID-19 situation at the locations they are coming from and will transit through and should describe measures to be taken to protect the UWRL from infection by the visitor. For locations in Utah, see <https://coronavirus.utah.gov/case-counts/>. For other domestic locations, see <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/us/coronavirus-us-cases.html>. For international locations see <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/map-and-travel-notice.html>.
2. Meetings should be conducted using virtual systems (e.g. Zoom, Webex) where possible
3. In person meetings among UWRL faculty, staff, students and visitors should follow USU guidelines for physical distancing and room occupancy and cleaning.
4. Events (e.g. conferences, workshops and organized open meetings) that include external visitors and participants require approval from the central university committee. See <https://www.usu.edu/covid-19/operations/events>, where guidelines are in preparation. Until these guidelines are released, external events at the UWRL are not permitted.

Training and Communication Plan

1. A copy of this plan will be emailed to department employees once approved.
2. UWRL leadership will hold a web conference for UWRL employees to discuss these guidelines and to answer any questions from employees.
3. Supervisors will monitor (using passive observation) their onsite employees for potential symptoms and send employees home who exhibit symptoms.
4. The UWRL will post USU-approved signage setting expectations for staying home when sick, respiratory hygiene and etiquette, and workplace behavior.
5. Employees who have been tested for COVID-19 and are waiting to receive test results, are requested to complete the USU COVID-19 questionnaire at: https://usu.service-now.com/usu/covid_19_question.do.

Utah COVID-19 Health Guidance Color-Coded Risk Phases and Return to Normal

Complete lifting of the limitations in this document will occur upon notification from USU authorities that COVID-19 restrictions are removed. A transition of Cache Valley to the Utah New Normal (Green) Risk Phase (see <https://coronavirus.utah.gov/utahs-health-guidance-system/>) does not alter these plans as face coverings, social distancing and other COVID-19 safety measures are still required under Utah's New Normal (Green) risk phase (see <https://coronavirus.utah.gov/utahs-new-normal-risk-phase/>).