



COVID-19 Safety for Field Work*

* For the purposes of this document, field work includes off-campus University-authorized activities conducted for research, teaching, or provision of services undertaken by faculty, staff, and students.

Travel approval

[University travel policy](#) during the pandemic will change periodically in response to local, state, and federal public health recommendations, so it is essential to check the current policy before planning a trip. Travel in the State of Illinois must be approved by the unit following established approval procedures. [All travel outside the State of Illinois is restricted and requires pre-approval from the Unit Executive Officer \(UEO\)](#). Out-of-State and international University-sponsored travel may require a second level review. Units may also specify additional mandatory safety measures. Check with your department head to determine the requirements specific to your unit.

Planning

For all work, Principal investigators/supervisors are required to identify hazards that employees/researchers may encounter and take appropriate safety measures to control those hazards. Consider COVID-19 safety measures as an addendum to other standard safety procedures. A comprehensive plan of field work safety will include how elements of COVID-19 safety will be handled including social distancing, transportation, emergency procedures, isolation periods before and following travel, food and water consumption, equipment-sharing, hand hygiene and surface disinfection. [Protocols should be consistent with established on-campus safety measures for in-person work](#). Make sure to include a contingency plan for isolating any individuals who develop symptoms of COVID-19 during travel. All safety measures should be documented and communicated to each team member **prior** to initiating field work.

Evaluate if the work can be postponed until later in 2021 when most individuals have been fully vaccinated for COVID-19. Current projections indicate this could be realized early this summer. Masking, distancing, and other mitigation actions will continue to be required in public until specific criteria are achieved related to the percentage of people vaccinated, infection rates, and hospitalization rates.

Quarantine period prior to travel

For field work that requires sharing of indoor space (travel vehicle, lodging, indoor worksites) with other unvaccinated individuals from different households, a pre-travel quarantine period should be established. One week prior to travel, each person should do only essential activities and limit close contacts with others. In addition, they should receive two negative PCR COVID-19 tests no sooner than 3 days apart during that week. If an individual is not based in the



COVID-19 Safety for Field Work*

Champaign-Urbana area and cannot access on-campus testing, they should [locate a testing site](#) and have a PCR COVID-19 test 1 to 3 days prior to travel. They must have the results confirming a negative test before travel.

No pre-travel quarantine period is required for individuals that are fully vaccinated (two weeks after final dose) for COVID-19. COVID-19 testing should continue as per their normal schedule.

Face coverings/Masks

Face masks must continue to be worn indoors and outdoors in areas considered public spaces, even if everyone on the field work team is fully vaccinated.

Particular attention should be given to the fit and filtration capabilities of face masks. As per the CDC, [certain types of masks are better than others](#). Masks should be snug to the face with no air gaps. [CDC recommends several methods to improve the fit of cloth and disposable masks](#). In addition, [disposable surgical/procedure masks can be worn as a first layer underneath a cloth mask](#) to provide a high-quality filtration layer. Another option is to use disposable masks with [higher quality filtration classified as KN95s](#), FFP2s etc. These masks should also have a snug fit and should NOT be layered with another mask. Note: increased filtration capabilities of masks must be balanced with the type of activity taking place while masked. Layering masks as described above or wearing a single KN95 should be avoided when strenuous physical activity is required to avoid heat and physical stress. Instead, wear a more breathable cloth mask, increase distancing and work in a well-ventilated area, preferably outdoors.

Car travel

For unvaccinated individuals, the best practice is to limit vehicle occupancy to one person (the driver). This mitigation is not necessary when:

1. The individuals already share a household (e.g., spouse, housemates)

OR

2. All individuals are fully vaccinated (two weeks after final dose) against SARS-CoV-2

The single person/vehicle restriction can create a number of logistical challenges. When multiple people must travel together in the same vehicle, and anyone in the group is unvaccinated, we recommend that other risk mitigation practices be implemented, including:

- Postponing the travel until all participants are fully vaccinated if possible (see Planning).
- Establishing a pre-travel quarantine period (see Planning).
- Minimizing the number of people per car if it is possible to use multiple vehicles. Always have the same people ride together throughout the trip – do not mix groups.



COVID-19 Safety for Field Work*

- Requiring face coverings/masks be worn by all occupants of the vehicle.
- Maximizing distancing inside vehicles. For vehicles with one row of seats, occupancy should be limited to one driver and one passenger sitting as far apart as possible. With multiple rows of seats, alternate passenger side seating and driver side seating by row. Prohibit anyone from sitting in the middle of a row.
- Providing ventilation within the vehicle. The car's ventilation should be set for fresh air intake, not recirculated air. The windows should be lowered ~ 3 inches to bring in additional fresh air.
- Avoiding eating and drinking while sharing the vehicle.
- Providing hand sanitizer and sanitizing wipes. Encourage hand hygiene and periodic wipe downs of surfaces, especially when switching drivers or positions within the vehicle.

Travel via public transport (plane, train, bus, ride share)

Travel using public transportation should be avoided if possible since distancing cannot be controlled. When crowded situations may be encountered, it is essential to wear a mask that fits well and has good filtration capabilities (see Masks/Face Coverings).

Physical distancing and minimizing contact with others

Field work teams should include the minimum number of people required to carry out the work while ensuring safety in the field. All field operations should allow for a minimum of 6 feet of spacing between people for:

- teams with unvaccinated individuals

And

- all activities that involve or may be encountered by members of the public

Whenever possible, plan fieldwork as day trips. If overnight lodging is required, book separate hotel rooms for each unvaccinated person. If possible, use extended stay lodging with private laundry and cooking facilities. If cooking facilities are not available, choose meal delivery, takeout or curbside pickup. If meals must be consumed in public, outside dining with distancing from others is the best option.

Ventilation

Mitigation practices of wearing face masks, physical distancing, and reducing occupancy levels help in reducing viral concentrations in enclosed, indoor spaces. Improved ventilation is an additional mitigation strategy. The [CDC suggests some approaches](#) for improving ventilation,



COVID-19 Safety for Field Work*

and extensive interventions may be difficult depending on the situation. However, measures to increase the introduction of outside air should be considered where possible. This includes opening windows and doors to increase airflow, and using fans in a window to exhaust room air to the outside, helping draw more outside air through other open windows.

Return quarantine period

For one week after returning from travel, each person should do only essential activities and avoid close contact with people who are at [increased risk for severe illness](#).

In addition, they should receive two negative PCR COVID-19 tests no sooner than 3 days apart during that week. If an individual is not based in the Champaign-Urbana area and cannot access on-campus testing, they should [locate a testing site](#) and have a PCR COVID-19 test 3 to 5 days after travel or immediately if they are experiencing symptoms consistent with COVID-19.

A return quarantine period is not necessary for individuals that were fully vaccinated (two weeks after final dose) prior to travel unless they experience symptoms consistent with COVID-19. If they have symptoms, they should test immediately and quarantine until receiving negative results. Regular COVID-19 testing should resume as per their normal schedule.