

CAS Guidelines for Field-based Travel: COVID-19 Pandemic*

March 18, 2020

(Subject to Change on Short Notice)

This guidance covers field-based travel that does not include air travel and is generally in-state and utilizes vehicles for transport. This can include research fieldwork, Extension fieldwork or other fieldwork that requires employees to travel to a field site other than their everyday work location. All field-based travel that requires reimbursement must have prior approval.

Supervisors should strongly consider canceling or postponing field-based trips, recognizing that they present unique risks because of the potential for shared transportation, cooking and eating meals, and housing. These attributes, in addition to the fieldwork involved, can make it challenging to practice social distancing and hand-washing necessary in establishing a safe work and learning environment. Supervisors may also have limited ability to bring someone home or find them treatment should a participant become ill.

Non-essential travel is not permitted. The University and CAS has previously provided guidance related to what constitutes essential activities. Please contact the dean's office if you have questions regarding this determination. If you can demonstrate how you can consistently and effectively meet each of the challenges and requirements noted in the previous paragraph, and you can demonstrate why your travel is essential, it will be considered for approval.

Who can travel?

Only employees who have no signs of any illness and have not knowingly been exposed to anyone with COVID-19 for the past 14 days will be considered for approved travel to the field.

Mitigation of Risk Related to COVID-19 Exposure or Spread

The recommendation is for employees to travel alone in separate vehicles, but no more than two people per vehicle. Motor Pool vehicles will come sanitized when they are picked up. You will need to frequently sanitize hard surfaces and touch points regularly throughout your trip. Utilize approved cleaners as described by the CDC. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/prevention.html> Maintain a distance of at least 6' from each other at all times. Have soap and water available for hand-washing, as well as hand sanitizer along with your emergency kit.

Food and Gas

When feasible, food and drinks should be brought from home, individually. No sharing of food or cooking as a group is allowable. If you must stop at a restaurant, only takeout food or delivery is allowable. Utilize hand sanitization measures and social distancing when stopping for gasoline.

Housing

If overnight stays are necessary, adhere to social distancing practices, (e.g. individual rooms where cleaning protocol is likely to meet the standards to limit the spread of disease, individual tents). Bunkhouse situations will not be permitted because of shared bathrooms, kitchen and living spaces prevent adequate social distancing.

Illness

If anyone becomes ill and has symptoms related to COVID-19, call your doctor or the local health authority. This contact information should be in your field work safety plan. All participants must follow the instructions provided. Notify your supervisor.

Staying in Contact

All travelers must adhere to the required check in/check out procedures as described in your field work safety plan. These procedures should require the ability to maintain regular contact with your supervisor so that travelers can keep informed of changing conditions coming from local, state, and federal authorities. Upon returning, debrief with your supervisor on any concerns that you may have about the health and safety of all participants.

Upon returning

Inform your supervisor of your return and note the health of all participants and any other relevant considerations.

Maintaining safety

Safety in the field is paramount. If you cannot conduct your fieldwork while minimizing risk, then it is best to reconsider your approach for the time being. It is not acceptable to increase risk in one area to accommodate the guidelines designed to limit exposure to SARS-CoV-2.

*Includes excerpts from OSU College of Forestry Administrative Memo #258.