

COVID-19 Guidance for Research Safety

The University of Arizona continues to closely monitor the outbreak of coronavirus disease, known as COVID-19. With the ongoing concern about the spread of this disease, Research, Innovation and Impact (RII) recommends that laboratories and research facilities plan for the possibility of a significant disruption to normal operations.

Each laboratory or research facility is best positioned to create a continuity plan that will meet their unique needs. The guidance below is provided to facilitate the development of that plan. (Information related to personal prevention and health planning may be found at the [University of Arizona Coronavirus COVID-19 website](#) and [Research Specific COVID-19 webpage](#).)

Research Continuity Guidance for Laboratories and Research Facilities

Assumptions that you can use for planning:

- Laboratory safety and minimizing risk to human subjects and animal care remains the priority.
- Non-essential in-person activity in laboratories is discouraged and we strongly encourage that all possible non-essential research work be migrated to online / work-from-home modes.
- A significant percentage of your laboratory workforce may be out sick or unable to come to work.
 - If a laboratory member and/or one of their household is sick, please inform them to stay home and self-quarantine. They should inform the PI and/or laboratory manager of their status.

- Decontamination of your workspace may be necessary in the event of a local illness.
 - The Facilities Management Custodial Services Strict Isolation Teams will address all areas that need a thorough disinfecting. Please call 621-3000 if you need support.
- Essential research infrastructure, such as power and telecommunications, will be maintained.
- Research Laboratory & Safety Services (RLSS, <https://rgw.arizona.edu/compliance/RLSS>) and most University operations will maintain critical functions.
- Core facilities and other resources may not be available.
- The University will communicate any disruptions to laboratory access.
- Your Associate Dean for Research (ADR) will be a primary means for aggregating and communicating research challenges that may cross colleges and require university-level guidance and resolution, and can act as a resource for faculty in this effort. Please communicate your challenges and needs to your ADR.

Steps you can take now to ensure continuity of critical functions:

- It is recommended that campus researchers at all levels develop plans for research projects going forward under the present conditions. Detailed instructions for these plans can be found here: <https://research.arizona.edu/covid-19-guidance-research-students-postdocs>.
 - Ensure that you have access to contact information for your critical staff and your communications plan is in place.
 - Plans should be shared with relevant supervisors and unit heads/chairs/directors, and be submitted to the RII database via Lori Schultz, lschultz@arizona.edu.
- Identify procedures and processes that require regular personnel attention (e.g. cell culture maintenance, animal studies).
 - Contact Institutional Animal Care & Use Committee (IACUC) and/or University Animal Care (UAC) for questions regarding continuing animal studies and their policies.

- Assess and prioritize critical laboratory activities and identify personnel able to safely perform these activities.
- Identify any research experiments that can be ramped down, curtailed, or delayed, following the guidance here regarding the scope of work, milestones, etc., <https://research.arizona.edu/covid-19-guidance-research-students-postdocs>.
- Cross-train research staff to fill in for others who may be out sick or unable to come to work.
 - Ensure staff have the appropriate training.
 - Consider documenting critical step-by-step instructions.
- Coordinate with colleagues who have similar research activities to ensure coverage of critical activities.
- Maintain a sufficient inventory of critical supplies that may be impacted by global shipping delays.
- Consider installing remote control monitoring devices for critical equipment (e.g., -80C freezers, liquid nitrogen storage dewars, incubators).
- Communicate significant planned absences and/or lab closures to your Associate Dean for Research, RLSS, IACUC, UAC, business offices, and other key administrative units.

Measures you can take to prevent the spread of illness among your group if the risk of COVID-19 increases within the University of Arizona community:

- The implementation of robust social distancing measures among personnel in your research spaces—for example, by mixing remote work, onsite work, staggering schedules, and by holding meetings by teleconference—should be developed immediately. (<https://research.arizona.edu/covid-19-guidance-research-students-postdocs>)
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds. **Hand sanitizer is not a substitute for hand washing in the laboratory.**
- A thorough cleaning and disinfecting of entire laboratories will be conducted by Facilities Services once a week. In addition, you should routinely disinfect common laboratory areas and touch points with fresh 10% bleach (e.g. doorknobs, sink handles, freezer doors, fume hood sashes, telephones, etc.).
- Remind and encourage staff to stay home when they are not feeling well.

- Test and update remote work technologies such as VPN and Zoom conferencing.

Other safety considerations:

- Ensure that individuals performing critical tasks have been adequately trained and understand whom to contact with technical or safety questions.
- **Avoid performing high-risk procedures alone.** Avoid working alone outside of normal business hours (8am to 5pm), even for lower-risk procedures. When working alone is necessary, exercise the utmost caution.
 - There are many apps available for remote check-ins when working alone is required (Ok Alone, Lone Worker, etc.), or you can simply schedule regular text/phone check-ins with colleagues.
 - Notify colleagues of your schedule when working alone for an extended period of time.
- **Ensure that high-risk materials (radioactive, biohazards, chemicals) are secured behind locked doors, in lock boxes, etc. Contact RLSS for specific questions or guidance for securing high-risk materials.**

Next Steps:

The [University of Arizona Coronavirus COVID-19 website](#) will be updated as new information becomes available. RII will continue to update the research community of changes or updates via email and the [Research Specific COVID-19 webpage](#).