

University of Saskatchewan Policy on Fieldwork and Associated Travel Safety

Category:	Health, Safety and Environment
Number:	3.13
Responsibility:	VP Finance and Resources VP Research VP Academic
Approval:	PEC Board of Governors
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Purpose:

The work of the University of Saskatchewan may take place in settings not normally considered to be part of the University, both in Canada and internationally. The term “fieldwork¹” refers to activities conducted for the purpose of research, study, or teaching undertaken by employees and/or students of the University at any “off-campus” workplace where the standard operating procedures of the University would not apply. The Fieldwork and Associated Travel Safety Policy applies to all members of the University community (faculty, staff and students) engaged in fieldwork, and is designed to ensure that persons engaged in fieldwork on behalf of the University incorporate appropriate preventive measures to reduce risk to themselves, their colleagues and the University, to aid in prevention of accidents and to maintain emergency plans to activate in the event that accidents do occur.

Principles:

The University of Saskatchewan recognizes that the research and scholarly activities of its faculty, staff and students may involve fieldwork, which can introduce more and/or different kinds of risk than activities conducted in the normal workplace. The Fieldwork and Associated Travel Safety Policy is intended to protect members of the University community who are involved in fieldwork so that legal requirements for health and safety of individuals and protection of the environment are met and due diligence is exercised. Safety is of particular concern when the activity or the workplace is deemed to be “high risk.”

Scope of this Policy:

This Policy applies to all members of the University community (faculty, staff and students) engaged in fieldwork, either as a participant or as a responsible party. The key persons involved in ensuring the safety of those engaged in fieldwork are Deans, Department Heads or Division Heads, Principal Investigators, Team Leaders and Team Members (who may be employees or students).

The Fieldwork and Associated Travel Safety Policy and related procedures are not intended to

¹ Definitions are provided in Fieldwork and Associated Travel Safety Procedures, Section 1.

limit or amend provisions of any collective agreement, or any other contractual agreement entered into by the University, University employees or student groups. The Policy is designed to complement related University policies, including (but not limited to):

a. Working Alone

Conducting fieldwork alone is not recommended, especially if the work is considered to be high risk. Consult Policy 3.12, the Working Alone Policy (http://www.usask.ca/university_secretary/policies/health/3_12.php), and/or the Department of Health, Safety and Environment (DHSE) for more details.

b. International Travel Risk Management – Academic Mobility Programs

See Policy 7.01 (http://www.usask.ca/university_secretary/policies/academic/7_01.php) for details.

c. Health, Safety and Environment Protection

See Policy 3.01 (http://www.usask.ca/university_secretary/policies/health/3_01.php) for details.

Policy:

Deans, Department Heads and Division Heads are responsible for ensuring that appropriate fieldwork and associated travel safety procedures and processes are implemented prior to the commencement of any fieldwork, taking into consideration the nature of hazards arising from activities, agents, equipment or areas where the fieldwork is to be conducted. Deans, Department Heads and Division Heads are responsible for ensuring that these procedures and processes are communicated and enforced, and it is the responsibility of the fieldworkers to comply. A “Risk Assessment” must be done before commencing the fieldwork. Special attention is required to activities or workplaces deemed “high risk”; in particular a “Fieldwork and Associated Travel Safety Planning Record” is required.

The Department of Health, Safety and Environment (DHSE) will monitor the implementation of this Policy and its associated procedures using the University’s Workplace Responsibilities System (WRS). The Department will provide guidance in the development of procedures where they do not exist.

Responsibilities

a. Dean:

As the highest authority within a College the Dean is responsible for:

- i.** ensuring that every department has suitable fieldwork safety procedures in place;
- ii.** ensuring that every department complies with the Policy and follows procedures.

b. Department Head (Dean in a Non-Departmentalized College) and/or Division Head:

The Department or Division Head is responsible for:

- i.** implementing fieldwork safety procedures within his/her department, division or unit.
- ii.** communicating the Policy and associated procedures to the academic supervisors and/or principal investigators;
- iii.** ensuring that a “Risk Assessment” is completed by the Principal Investigator;

- iv. storing a Fieldwork and Travel Safety Planning Record for each applicable fieldwork project.

c. Principal Investigator:

Responsibility for ensuring fieldwork safety rests primarily with the Principal Investigator, or the person supervising or guiding the specific project at the location involved. This person is expected to exercise good judgment, and to take reasonable steps to protect the health and safety of participating team members.

The Principal Investigator is responsible for:

- i. approving the composition of the fieldwork team;
- ii. ensuring that a Risk Assessment is completed prior to departure;
- iii. making arrangements for appropriate transportation to and from the location of the fieldwork, where applicable;
- iv. considering the need to accommodate team members with disabilities, including any financial implications;
- v. determining what safety equipment is appropriate, and ensuring that each team member is instructed in the proper use of the equipment (examples include hard hats, safety boots, goggles, etc.);
- vi. ensuring that each team member is made aware of the specific requirements that must be met for participating in the fieldwork prior to departure (such as visas, immunizations, health insurance requirements, etc);
- vii. ensuring that there are first aid supplies and a trained team member to use them if an emergency should arise;
- viii. identifying appropriate safety procedures in case of emergency or distress (one example is sensitivity training for entrance to poverty-stricken areas or war zones);
- ix. ensuring that team members are informed of the availability of procedures for contacting the University to obtain assistance in a crisis situation;
- x. recognizing the right and responsibility of an individual to exercise personal judgment in acting and avoiding harm in situations of apparent danger;
- xi. requiring every team member to attend any relevant training courses on field safety;
- xii. ensuring that each team member receives appropriate site-specific training, including information on the known risks and physical hazards of the area in which the fieldwork is to be carried out;
- xiii. establishing a chain of leadership that is understood by all participants and documenting this chain of responsibility;
- xiv. maintaining written documentation of all the above steps and any other required safety procedures (this documentation can be part of the Fieldwork and Associated Travel Safety Planning Record). It shall be filed with the office of the Department Head, Division Head or Dean prior to departure for fieldwork, and maintained for a minimum of three years.

d. Team Leader:

The leader of a fieldwork team may be the Principal Investigator or, in the absence of the Principal Investigator, may be another team member designated by the Principal Investigator.

The Team Leader is responsible for:

- i. ensuring implementation of the controls and safety procedures established by the

- Principal Investigator;
- ii. ensuring that the team members use appropriate safety equipment and follow appropriate safety procedures and medical precautions;
 - iii. conducting on-going risk assessments during the fieldwork and reporting significant new hazards to the Principal Investigator and/or Dean/Department Head/Division Head;
 - iv. addressing or resolving any safety concerns that arise in the field;
 - v. maintaining regular contact with the Principal Investigator and/or college/departamental contact (Dean/Department Head/Division Head) wherever and whenever possible;
 - vi. informing the Principal Investigator and college/departamental contact (Dean/Department Head/Division Head) of all substantive safety incidents that occur in the field in a timely fashion.
- e. Team Member:**
- Each member of a fieldwork team plays an important role in maintaining his or her own safety during fieldwork. Where applicable, a team member's duties include:
- i. understanding the requirements of the fieldwork safety procedures for the project;
 - ii. familiarizing himself/herself with the risks of their particular field project. This may include signing a document which acknowledges the risks and/or playing an integral part in documenting preventive measures in the Fieldwork and Travel Safety Planning Record;
 - iii. using the appropriate protective equipment provided by the Principal Investigator;
 - iv. working safely and in a manner to prevent harm to his/herself or to others;
 - v. providing evidence of a satisfactory state of health and immunization status;
 - vi. providing evidence of adequate health insurance coverage;
 - vii. reporting any identified hazards to the Team Leader in a timely fashion.

Procedures:

College, Department and/or Principal Investigator specific procedures are maintained within their respective units. Guidelines for the development of new procedures are available on the Department of Health, Safety and Environment (DHSE) website www.usask.ca/dhse/biosafety/Field%20Work.htm .

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