

# Fieldwork Safety Procedure

Document # 1101.09 – Rev. 1 (October 2023)

Office of the Chief Risk Officer

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Version Control Table

Version Number	Owner	Approver	Change Summary	Status
1	ORCO	OCRO	New	N/A

# 1. Document Background

## Purpose and scope of document

The Fieldwork Safety Procedure (hereafter “the procedure”) outlines the University of Ottawa (also known as “uOttawa”) procedure for safely executing fieldwork activities outside uOttawa premises.

The procedure applies to uOttawa employees and is extended to serve as a reference for stakeholders at uOttawa. The procedure does not outline all the independent requirements and potential risks or challenges relevant specific to any projects, workspaces, or situations, but rather is intended to as a framework for building a fit-for-purpose approach for managing the applicable risks.

## Terms and definitions

Refer to the [OHS Glossary](#) for the OHS terms and definitions that are applicable to the documents within the management system.

## Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of individuals, including supervisors and workers, that apply to this procedure are detailed in the [General OHS Program Manual](#) and [Administrative Procedure 14-1](#) (Internal Responsibility Procedure for Health and Safety Issues).

In addition to the roles and responsibilities outlined in Procedure 14-1, responsibilities specific to this procedure include:

### Supervisors

- Inform the department’s administration office of the fieldwork activity at least two weeks before departing for work within Ontario and at least one month before departing for interprovincial or international fieldwork
- Evaluate the fieldwork activity to identify actual and potential hazards by referring to the [Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment \(HIRA\) Procedure](#)
- Develop and implement additional safety measures not specified in this document, including emergency procedures specific to the activity prior to departure, as required
- Ensure the ratio of participant(s) to supervisor(s) is within recommended guidelines; the ratio should be based on the level of risk of the fieldwork (as determined through the HIRA)
- Ensure that all participants conducting fieldwork have read and understood this procedure
- Ensure that fieldwork participants complete and submit the necessary fieldwork forms (e.g., informed consent, waivers, fieldwork declaration, etc.) and review the completed HIRA
- Conduct an orientation session for fieldwork participants to cover the specific purpose of the trip, its challenges, minimum requirements (e.g., vaccinations, additional insurance, etc.), the risks associated with the fieldwork, the precautions implemented during the fieldwork, local laws and customs, and the emergency procedures to follow
- Approve the composition of the fieldwork team. Ensure that participants possess the competencies required to deal with anticipated situations

- Identify and implement appropriate health, safety and security mitigation and control procedures, including measures that deal with emotional or psychological hazards created in the fieldwork environment
- Ensure that protective and research equipment are ready and that participants have received related and necessary instruction and training on this equipment (e.g., Wilderness First Aid, Pleasure Craft Operator Card, etc.)
- Ensure that participants use equipment safely and follow procedures and proposed medical precautions
- Take company safety records and facility health and safety procedures into consideration when selecting companies involved in field operations (including airlines, rental agencies, etc.)
- Take responsibility, to the extent reasonable, for the safety of those participating in fieldwork activities for the duration of the trip, including before, during, and after activities listed on the trip schedule, such as daily verification that the number of participants arriving at the fieldwork site is equal to the number returning to the University at the conclusion of fieldwork, etc.

### **Workers**

- Provide/supply services and perform work (as agreed upon in work contract) in a manner that considers the health and safety of fieldwork participants and supervisors, and where necessary, notify the fieldwork supervisor of potential hazards and risks associated with services and work
- Provide proof of applicable certifications, insurance, and licenses as required in the procurement/contracting process
- Follow written and verbal instructions issued by supervisors and persons in authority and assist in implementation of instructions issued by supervisors where required
- Identify hazards, assess risks, and report incidents and/or concerns to a supervisor immediately (or as soon as is reasonably possible)
- Adhere to uOttawa procedures and safety requirements

### **Students**

- Behave in a respectful and safe manner, taking reasonable precautions to ensure their actions do not endanger themselves or other fieldwork participants and supervisors
- If health conditions warrant, seek medical advice prior to participating in fieldwork activities
- Follow written and verbal instructions issued by supervisors and persons in authority
- Identify hazards, assess risks, and report incidents and/or concerns to a supervisor immediately (or as soon as is reasonably possible)
- Prior to participating in fieldwork activities, notify the fieldwork supervisor of required medication and/or medical condition(s) that restricts the individual's ability to undertake certain aspects of the proposed fieldwork, or increases their risk if they participate
- In consultation with the supervisor, complete and submit relevant fieldwork forms, such as informed consent forms, waivers, fieldwork declaration, etc., prior to the deadlines established by the supervisor

## Reference Documents

- [Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment Procedure](#)

## 2. Procedure

### Procedural Steps

The following procedural steps **must be followed** when planning for or performing fieldwork:

1. Plan for fieldwork activity and seek approval
2. Prepare for fieldwork
3. Perform fieldwork
4. Debrief upon fieldwork completion

Additional steps may be required based on the project or work scope.

### STEP 1 Plan for fieldwork activity and seek approval

#### Key Activities

- Complete the [uOttawa Fieldwork Form](#) to assist in planning for fieldwork activity
- Review and acquire insurance as necessary, validating the insurance decision with OCRO
- Obtain and complete the Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (HIRA) form to inform the Fieldwork form
- Identify necessary tools, equipment, training, assessments, services, documents, procedures, applications, permits, and approvals required to execute fieldwork
- Submit completed forms to the appropriate faculty supervisor (e.g., dean or vice-dean) for review and approval at least two weeks before departure for work within Ontario and at least one month before departure for interprovincial or international fieldwork

#### Contextual Details

##### *Fieldwork form and hazard identification and risk assessment (HIRA)*

University of Ottawa staff and students must ensure that the appropriate faculty supervisor (dean or vice-dean) approves of their proposed fieldwork activities before they start by submitting the Fieldwork form, including necessary information. This procedure contains guidance on how to fill out the form. Supervisors must also check that fieldwork team members have purchased insurance and must check with the OCRO that this insurance is appropriate for the scope of work.

Where additional information is required or questions arise, contact your supervisor, HSRM, or OCRO for assistance.

Supervisors shall use the HIRA process outlined in the [Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment Procedure](#) to identify fieldwork activities and their current and potential fieldwork hazards at the proposed activity location.

The assessment shall include an evaluation for potential hazards including, but not limited to:

- Physical hazards
- Biological hazards
- Chemical hazards
- Psychological hazards
- Ergonomic hazards

A list of common hazards from each hazard type are included in Appendix 1.

Health and safety deficiencies identified through initial and ongoing assessments shall be prioritized and controls will be implemented to appropriately address them. Where hazards cannot reasonably be controlled, appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) shall be used. Personal protective equipment must be appropriate for use, in serviceable condition, and should bear an appropriate certification mark, typically from the Canadian Standards Association (CSA). Daily safety meetings will include activity-specific HIRA; a HIRA will also be performed whenever the scope of work or physical fieldwork location changes significantly.

During fieldwork activities, the ratio of supervisory personnel (including assistants) to students conducting research-related work must be sufficient to ensure effective hazard control and mitigation (determined through the HIRA). The approving body is responsible for determining an appropriate ratio. An acceptable ratio of students-to-persons in supervisory roles depends on the nature of the fieldwork activity, the training of participants, their expertise and experience in the activity, familiarity with hazards inherent to the activity/location, and the maturity of activity participants.

Participants must have reached the age of majority and are expected to conduct themselves in a professional and reasonable manner. Fieldwork activities involving minors must be discussed and coordinated with OCRO. For low-risk routine activities, a maximum ratio of 30 students per supervisor(s) may be acceptable; however, the University of Ottawa recommends that at least two (2) persons in supervisory roles be present during fieldwork activities. Fieldwork activities conducted in isolation are strongly discouraged.

#### *Out-of-country fieldwork*

Fieldwork participants who travel outside Canada may face additional considerations due to the requirements of certain international partners. The International Office and Global Affairs Canada provide information, such as travel advisories, document requirements, and emergency information, for Canadians travelling abroad. [Policy 128](#) applies to out-of-country fieldwork.

Fieldwork participants travelling outside of Canada are encouraged to register with Global Affairs Canada prior to travel so that the Government of Canada can contact them while abroad in the event of an emergency (such as a natural disaster or civil unrest).

Fieldwork participants may also require additional vaccinations to protect them from region-specific hazards.

Researchers who intend to bring research materials or specimens back to Canada must ensure that such material can lawfully enter Canada prior to arriving at customs. For example, certain plants cannot be brought into Canada and will be confiscated by CBSA.

The [International Office](#) can also provide recommendations for fieldwork activities involving international travel.

### *Fieldwork-specific emergency procedures*

Before departing for the field, fieldwork supervisors must establish specific emergency procedures that apply to the work being conducted. Such procedures include: drafting lists of contact information and locations for local emergency services (e.g., police, ambulance, park ranger, etc.); as well as the procedures to follow if individuals become lost or need to be evacuated due to illness or injury, loss of important equipment/documents, etc. For example, if an emergency results in a mobility problem, the majority of the group should remain with the affected person (i.e., in a group of four people or more, two participants can go get help; in a group of two or three individuals, only one person should go for help).

An example emergency contact list is provided in Appendix 2.

Health and safety requirements identified during the assessment shall be documented and communicated to the appropriate parties. Documentation shall meet the requirements outlined in the [General OHS Program Manual](#).

## **STEP 2 Prepare for fieldwork**

### **Key activities**

- Procure the necessary items and information
- Collect necessary signed fieldwork forms from participants
- Provide fieldwork orientation for all participants prior to departure
- Provide applicable training to all participants prior to departure
- Inspect all equipment prior to departure

### **Contextual Details**

#### *Procurement*

Items and information identified in the planning phase shall be procured by the fieldwork supervisor. Where equipment must be provided by the University for students (e.g., when equipment standards must be met), it will be done following the process defined by [Procurement](#) or identified as necessary for students to procure before the orientation phase. Fieldwork equipment will be inspected as identified below. For additional guidance on equipment and information procurement steps contact faculty/service management.

#### *Fieldwork consent*

Prior to orienting participants all applicable fieldwork forms must be signed by participants and collected and documented by the fieldwork supervisor. Applicable fieldwork forms may include informed consent, waivers, and fieldwork declaration.

### *Orientation*

Prior to departing for fieldwork all support staff and students shall be oriented by the fieldwork supervisor. The orientation shall cover the topics highlighted in the fieldwork planning form and any additional topics associated with the execution of the planned activities such as, local laws and customs, disciplinary measures, drug and alcohol consumption, etc.

Fieldwork locations are considered workplaces, and as such, activities conducted in fieldwork locations are subject to University workplace policies. Consequently, in accordance with University policy, smoking is not permitted in fieldwork locations, including all vehicles. Personnel must be fit for work, including in the field; therefore, no alcohol, recreational drugs (marijuana or other) or other impairing substances are permitted in a workplace setting.

If legal recreational substances are consumed outside of the workplace setting, individuals are responsible for ensuring that they consume such substances in a safe and responsible manner in accordance with local laws and regulations. Personnel must be fit to return to work.

Note that foreign jurisdictions (e.g., cities, provinces, states, countries, etc.) may have different laws, standards, and customs. Prior to departure, the fieldwork supervisor must ensure that the fieldwork team is familiar with, understands, and complies with, local requirements at all times. The supervisor shall consult an HSRM (or OCRO) to confirm whether additional training or precautionary measures are necessary.

Where fieldwork involves managing or handling hazardous materials, the [Hazardous Materials and Waste Management Procedure](#) shall be followed.

### *Training*

All applicable and required fieldwork-related training and fieldwork equipment training will be identified in the orientation and shall be provided to, and completed by, supervisors, workers, and students prior to the start of fieldwork activities. The fieldwork supervisor shall retain the training documentation. Any participant who does not complete required training shall seek appropriate exemptions from the fieldwork supervisor (and/or faculty management/OCRO) prior to being allowed to participate in the fieldwork activity.

### *Inspection of equipment*

Necessary fieldwork equipment is specific to the activity being conducted; therefore, all equipment that is required to perform the fieldwork activity shall be inspected by the fieldwork supervisor, or other competent faculty personnel, and its condition will be noted in an inspection log prior to beginning the fieldwork activity. Any defective equipment should be tagged and taken out of service and replaced with properly functioning equipment prior to beginning the fieldwork activity.

## **STEP 3 Perform fieldwork**

### **Key activities**

- Perform daily safety meeting before the start of each fieldwork session



- Inspect critical equipment daily prior to starting fieldwork
- Execute the fieldwork as described in planning and preparation steps
- Perform participant check-in before and after each fieldwork session
- Report any incidents and respond to any emergencies (as necessary)

## **Contextual Details**

### *Daily safety meeting*

Before the start of each day's fieldwork, a safety meeting will be held for all participants, supervisors, and workers. The safety meeting will review the HIRA for the work that is being completed on that day, the controls that are in place to minimize the hazards and risks, emergency management plans, communication plans and contact information, check in procedures and their applicable locations, as well as completing the equipment inspection.

Safety meetings must be documented and record the topics discussed and attendance. Should a fieldworker not attend a meeting, a supplementary meeting with the specific fieldworker and supervisor must be held to brief them on the topics discussed and review daily safety information.

**The health and safety of fieldwork participants always takes priority over the fieldwork activity itself.**

### *Critical Equipment Inspection*

Every day, students and supervisors must inspect critical equipment before starting a fieldwork session. An inspection serves to identify potential deficiencies, damages, or defects in the equipment that would affect normal functionality in an emergency. An inspection must be documented as a checklist and must include a review of:

- Battery life and working condition of navigation and communication equipment (including stock of extra batteries)
- Flashlight
- Clothing appropriate for fieldwork conditions
- Food and water supply
- Necessary medication
- Contents and condition of first aid or other medical equipment
- Condition and working function of required PPE
- Condition and working function of other critical equipment (e.g., scuba gear, ropes, sample containers where samples present hazard to students or participants, etc.)

Damaged or defective equipment shall be removed from service and marked as "out of service" such that it may not be used for the duration of the fieldwork.

### *Check in procedures*

Prior to initiating the fieldwork, a daily check-in will be complete to ensure all students and participants are present. [SecurUO WorkAlone](#) should also be used as an added check-in resource. At the completion of the fieldwork session, a subsequent check will be completed to ensure all participants have returned prior to leaving the fieldwork site and returning to lodging or campus. If any participants are not accounted for during either check-in, emergency procedures will be enacted as necessary. Incidents will be reported as necessary.

Fieldwork should be executed according to the plan and all participants and workers should follow the instructions issued by the fieldwork supervisor. Additionally, fieldwork should be carried out in a manner that complies with local regulations and customs (where applicable) ensuring that the potential impact (environmental, or otherwise) of participants work is as small as reasonably possible.

### *Buddy System*

A buddy system shall be put in place for any fieldwork in any environment or workspace where work is complete across large geographic areas, or in areas where loss of contact between participants can occur. The second party is intended to act as a call person and summon assistance in the event of an emergency.

**Fieldwork activities conducted in isolation are strongly discouraged.**

### *Incidents and emergencies*

All incidents and near misses shall comply with the processes defined in the [Incident Management Procedure](#) and shall be noted and reported to the University (e.g., Protection Services) and to local authorities when possible and if applicable. Emergency procedures created specifically for the fieldwork setting should be used before referring to general emergency reporting procedures highlighted above.

## **STEP 4 Debrief following completion of fieldwork**

### **Key activities**

- Debrief and share details after completing fieldwork and returning to campus

### **Contextual Details**

#### *Debrief activities*

The University recommends that participants debrief shortly after they complete the fieldwork activity to highlight situations in which the group excelled and to learn from situations that were unexpected. The debrief will help fieldwork supervisors prepare for subsequent fieldwork activities.

Items to discuss in the debrief include:

- Review of the risk assessment done prior to the fieldwork activity to determine if any changes to fieldwork scope are needed, especially if the fieldwork will be repeated in the same location or capacity
- Review the fieldwork form (where applicable) and address any sections that need to be updated or revised to include new information or considerations, such as permitting, training, equipment etc.
- Review and investigate any reported events (e.g., accident, incident, near miss, etc.)
- Take reasonable corrective actions
- Record key findings or conclusions

It is recommended that the supervisor maintain the relevant documentation, including risk assessments, check-in logs, etc.

### 3. Emergency Procedures

#### Fieldwork Emergency Situations

These steps inform members of the fieldwork group, and the University community, of the proper procedure if an emergency arises during fieldwork activities.

##### 1. Contact emergency services

During a situation requiring immediate medical, police, or fire response in the field, supervisors must immediately call 911 or the equivalent local emergency number. They must then notify Protection Services (613-562-5499) to initiate other University of Ottawa response measures. If emergency contact is not possible from the location where fieldwork is being conducted, the fieldwork supervisor and any assistants must assess the risk of leaving, or sending representatives from the group to leave the fieldwork area, to contact emergency services (local or other) and Protection Services (if possible).

##### 2. Follow fieldwork-specific emergency procedures

Each fieldwork activity must prepare emergency procedures that are designed specifically around the planned activity before the fieldwork commences. If an emergency occurs while fieldwork is being completed, the fieldwork-specific emergency procedures should be followed first. These can include, but are not limited to: use of first aid, locating lost participants, evacuating due to a natural disaster or civil unrest, etc.

##### 3. Report incident

For situations that are not considered urgent, participants should record and report any accidents or incidents (including near misses) that occur during their fieldwork. The supervisor must complete an accident/incident report whenever a person is, or could have been, injured in an event involving chemical, biological, or radioactive substances or physical agents, including spills and accidental emissions, as well as any illness contracted because of fieldwork or that may develop following the fieldwork. Follow the [OHS Incident Management Procedure](#) for reporting incidents and near misses.

In urgent situations, reporting will be delayed until the situation is under control and it is appropriate to devote time to reporting the incident or emergency.

## Appendix 1: Hazard Types and Examples

### Hazard types

The hazards that exist in each fieldwork setting vary greatly; however, here are some common hazard types for reference:

- Physical hazards: radiation, magnetic fields, pressure extremes (high pressure or vacuum), noise, etc.
- Environmental hazards: weather, earthquakes, mudslides, flooding, cliffs, unstable work surfaces, and elevated working positions, etc.
- Biological hazards: bacteria, viruses, insects, plants, birds, animals, and humans, etc.
- Chemical hazards: depends on the physical, chemical, and toxic properties of the chemical
- Psychological hazards: stress, violence, etc.
- Ergonomic hazards: repetitive movements, improper set up of workstation or equipment, etc.

For more information on the HIRA process, refer to the [Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment Procedure](#).

## Appendix 2: Emergency Contact List

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Employee/student number:</b>
<b>Telephone number:</b>	<b>Email:</b>
<b>Special considerations:</b>  Example: allergy to XYZ.	

### EMERGENCY CONTACTS

#### CONTACT 1

<b>Name:</b>	
<b>Telephone number:</b>	<b>Email:</b>
<b>Address:</b>	

#### CONTACT 2

<b>Name:</b>	
<b>Telephone number:</b>	<b>Email:</b>
<b>Address:</b>	