

## FIELD SAFETY GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR PROJECT PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS

*As the PI of a field project, you and the university are responsible for the safety and well-being of your party until everyone is out of the field and back home safely.*

1. **General Responsibilities:** All PIs, the university, and team members have a role for ensuring the safety of their team members. The university, as employer, has a responsibility to provide and foster a safe work environment. PIs, as supervisors, are responsible for a great deal of what goes on day-to-day in their research. PI's and the university must ensure a safe and healthful workplace for team members.
2. **During the Project Developmental Stage:** Field safety begins during the proposal development stage. Plan at this stage by determining the team's needs and experience. PIs are responsible for:
  - a. Determining risks associated with the proposed work and determining alternative safer methods.
  - b. Determining if all of the team members have the experience to conduct the proposed field work. If you think nothing will go wrong and will not happen to you, find the person who had it happen to them and learn from their experience.
  - c. Determining if the team members have access to or if the PI needs to budget for the appropriate safety equipment and training. (e.g. If project members will climb towers, budget for safety harnesses and tower climbing training)
  - d. Determining if there is a realistic amount of time to procure safety equipment and have the team members take any needed training before the field campaign begins.
3. **Prior to Leaving for the Field:** Communicate with your team regarding tasks and safety concerns. All teams members, including students, have the right to feel safe; to refuse duties that they do not believe to be safe; to have safe accommodations; to understand if they will work without a supervisor in a remote field setting; to be provided adequate field safety equipment and training; to understand any insurance coverages for accidents, injuries, or medical emergencies; to understand and have available communication equipment; to know that any Title IX issues will be handled professionally; and to discuss any of these issues without retaliation. Below are ideas to ensure this happens:
  - a. Hold team meetings and be sure that all field party members know the field plan, what conditions to expect and the potential risks (e.g., if you need

personnel to hike three mile transects each day, make sure this is clear during the hiring and during team meetings).

- b. Develop a communications plan (devices, contacts). Obtain and practice using your communication devices. Be sure all team members can operate devices, know who to call when an emergency occurs, and be able to communicate their location in the field when they are completing the field portion of their research.
- c. Develop emergency plans, including those for evacuation, need of medical attention, Title IX issues, and other contingencies. Engage your field team and your in-town communication point of contact in developing this plan.
- d. Ensure that the field party will have adequate shelter, proper clothing, sufficient food, and correct safety equipment. Inspect and use the gear prior to field work if you have not used it before.
- e. Working with your team, develop a clear field leadership plan, including establishing a person in-command in case the PI is injured or not in the field.

4. **In the Field:** As the PI you are responsible for ensuring to the extent possible the safety of your team en route to the site, day-to-day safety, and safety of your team returning home after the field work is completed. This could mean that the PI may designate a field leader (if the PI is not in the field) who assumes field leader responsibility. To achieve safety, the field leader should consider:

- a. Hold a daily morning safety minute (all hands). Review anything that happened the day before that might have had safety ramifications. Discuss all aspects of the day's plans. Know the weather and environmental hazards before the team starts the workday.
- b. If an injury occurs that requires more than on-site first aid, know when to make a decision regarding evacuation for the team member. This could be you, the field leader, or someone designated as the 'expert'. Take into consideration the injured party's concerns.
- c. Be aware of the state of the field members' mental and physical states. Ask questions related to those; be informed. Be sure that you set realistic daily expectations based on the environment and the experience of the personnel.
- d. Set an example, strive so that: "No one gets hurt collecting field data"

*Come home. Come home friends. Maybe get all the work done.*

Paraphrasing of a great maxim from the famous British Everest climber, Roger Baxter-Jones