Maintaining Progress in Research Activities

Principal Investigators and research labs should discuss plans now for emergency scenarios including a lack of personnel physically able to be in the lab, disruptions in supplies, or suspended operations. While we hope contingency measures will not be required, preparedness minimizes impact if they become necessary.

Create a Staffing and Essential Duty Coverage Plan

- Prepare for a reduced number of personnel to be in the research facilities for a 30- to 60-day period or longer if necessary.
- Consider how research projects may be re-scoped from active laboratory experiments or field studies to more cerebral activities such as data analyses, modeling, report and publication writing. If a major re-scoping is required, be sure to communicate and secure approvals from funding agency program managers.
- Learn the UA's definitions of emergency conditions
- Identify and assign roles and responsibilities for essential functions.
- Identify any experiments that can be ramped down, curtailed or delayed.
- Determine delegation of authority in case the responsible individual is unable to make decisions.
- Consider having one individual at a time in the lab to perform essential functions. Maintain a communication plan and system in place to verify the individual is safe during this time in the lab.
- Cross-train personnel to cover essential functions.
- Plan for a decontamination of workspaces should a local illness occur. Use the CDC's Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection Recommendations for Laboratories. If you have questions about types of disinfectants for sensitive equipment, contact UAF's Environmental Health, Safety, and Risk Management.
- Coordinate with colleagues who have similar research activities to identify ways to ensure coverage of critical activities.
- Consider generating data now that can be analyzed remotely in the future.
- Prepare to implement a shutdown checklist
- Escalation to alternate operations or shutdown may mean buildings would be locked 24/7, so you may require a University ID to enter your building.
- In extreme circumstances, which are not currently foreseen, access may be restricted to critical personnel.
- Coordinate with support offices such VCR, IRB, IACUC, OGCA, EH&S etc…

Prepare Personnel to Work Remotely

- Researchers who are immuno-compromised, or have other individual circumstances should work with their advisors, PIs, or supervisors on alternative arrangements as needed.
- Personnel who are ill should stay home.
- Ensure emergency contact information is current in MY UA, department etc…
- Create a contact list of all members of your group (employees, student, postdocs, trainees, visiting scientists, etc…)
- Make this contact information accessible and always available.
- Share this contact information with your business manager/department administrator

- Confirm personnel have remote access (VPN)
- Verify access to necessary files, data, software applications, etc.
- Determine how you will communicate with remote personnel. Email, Zoom, Skype, Microsoft Teams, WhatsApp, Slack, etc..
- Review your plans with all personnel in your group.

Lab Equipment

- Identify critical lab equipment
- Determine if there is any equipment that cannot be shut down and equipment that requires routine monitoring such as liquid nitrogen dewars, inert atmosphere gloveboxes, vacuum lines, freezers, and incubators.
- Determine how long it will take to shutdown equipment and experiments. Document the safest and most expeditious procedures.
- Determine availability of remote monitoring and back-up power supplies to maintain critical equipment.
- If required monitoring cannot be performed, notify Environmental Health and Safety.
- Plan for the unavailability of repairs performed by facilities and other service providers.

Materials and Supplies

Removing materials from the lab

- Under no circumstances should researchers take materials other than laptops, data storage devices, or computers offsite (e.g., to their homes) to ensure research continuity during a curtailment. All essential research must be conducted within the confines of appropriate laboratory space.
- You may arrange with your PI or lab manager to take notebooks, data storage devices, or computers to help you work remotely.
- Care must be taken with identifiable human subjects and animal subjects' data
    - Preferably should be loaded into a secure UA/UAF server rather than on a laptop.
    - If it is on a laptop, the laptop **must** be encrypted
    - Do not place it on a data storage device

    - Under no circumstances is it allowable to remove animals from the university

Contingency Planning

- Identify materials and supplies including Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
- Determine if any special contingencies arise due to brief utility outages. For example, temperature sensitive materials.
- Secure hazardous materials (e.g., radioactive materials) and store hazardous materials and waste in the appropriate environment (e.g., containment, shielding, etc) in case access is not available for an extended period.
- Plan for a disruption in orders, vendors, service providers:
- Assess which supplies or services are truly critical.

- Contact vendors now regarding the potential for disruption. Identify alternative sources.
- For supplies or services that would be needed even during research curtailment, work with your group and with your department or building manager to include this need in your continuity plan.
- Plan for the unavailability of scientific service centers and other fee-for-service resources

Impacted Research – Notice to Sponsors

If you are concerned that your research will be negatively impacted because you are unable to meet timelines, milestones, deliverables, etc., notice to the sponsor (government, non-profit, industry) may be necessary.

If you have must change the scope of your proposed plans to ensure continued progress of your research, contact your program manager after you have formulated a viable alternate plan but before investing substantial resources. Be certain to secure approval from the program manager in writing for substantial project changes.

Questions concerning your government or foundation sponsored grant should be directed to your **program officer** and keep the Office of Grants and Contracts Administration in the communication loop.

For questions concerning your government or industry contracts, contact the Office of Grants and Contracts Administration (OGCA).

Some of this information was compiled based on information from universities across the US related to COVID-19 https://collaborate.ncura.edu/samplepoliciesandprocedures.