

# UCANR Off-Campus Research Continuity Plan

## *COVID-19 Pandemic*

### **Motivation for these actions**

UC ANR remains open for important research activities at this point in time. However, research activities must be adjusted and reduced wherever possible to minimize the spread and possible impact of the coronavirus. In addition, as local public health requirements are changing rapidly, we must prepare for the possibility of a complete cessation of non-critical research on short notice, while maintaining critical systems. The requisites described draw upon the actions taken at a number of top research facilities at UC campuses and across the country, and support current UCOP guidance.

Our primary goal is to minimize person-to-person interactions for all personnel and the general public with whom we interact in the course of getting to and being present at work. We expect that researchers will shift as much of their work as possible to electronic or other remote formats that reduce physical contact (writing, data analyses, proposal preparation, and virtual team meetings). However, we understand that several research activities have a need to be conducted in person at RECs, county facilities, and on cooperator fields. Our goal is to reduce the number of people engaged in these research efforts and to do this by prioritizing the most critical activities in light of the current world situation.

### **Continuity of off-campus research**

While research and extension are ongoing, it is critical that REC and County Directors ensure all aspects of social distancing are enforced, even during the conduct of off-campus research.

- Those employees who can work remotely, should do so, whenever possible.
- Wash hands frequently, for at least 20 seconds, with soap and water (or use effective hand sanitizer), cover coughs or sneezes, and avoid shaking hands.
- Clean surfaces more frequently.
- For those who continue research functions, maintain at least six feet of separation at all times.
  - This applies during transit time, work time, and during breaks.
- Supervisors must prevent gathering of personnel by seeking alternative strategies, such as Zoom meetings or video chat visits with clientele.
- Employees must not congregate in break rooms, restrooms, and other shared spaces. This could take the form of staggered shifts for lunch and breaks and other activities.
- Density of personnel in laboratory spaces must be reduced drastically to maintain the six foot minimum distance between people.

- Schedule use of laboratory space to minimize number of personnel in the space at any given time, without compromising worker safety.
- Care must be taken in rotating personnel in and out of labs and work spaces, particularly in light of recent research on COVID-19 survival in air and on surfaces: 3 hours in air, up to 72 hours on plastic and stainless steel, up to 24 hours on cardboard (or whatever the most accurate research is).
- Employees who have symptoms of acute respiratory illness must notify their supervisor and stay home and not come to work until they are free of fever, signs of a fever, and any other symptoms for at least 72 hours, without the use of fever-reducing or other symptom-altering medicines.
- Human subject research involving immunocompromised or elderly at-risk participants or research involving group meetings or appointments should be delayed until restrictions have been removed or use alternative interactions via electronic means whenever possible. These modifications may be implemented prior to IRB approval when it is necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the participants. Critical research that requires face-to-face interaction with participants can continue if a participant's health and safety is ensured (e.g., some clinical trials). Virtual interaction with human participants is permitted (e.g. by Zoom, phone, or other means).

***When the above conditions cannot be met without compromising worker safety, the research function must be discontinued.***

We ask that PIs and Directors consider long-term implications when making decisions. Consider if the project can be sustained, should the pandemic continue beyond mid-April. Take into account 'shelter at home' orders that continue to expand across the state, and may differ by county. The safety and well-being of our employees will continue to be our highest priority.

In addition to this document, UC ANR Directors and researchers should also consider any additional guidance regarding the performance of research activities from the UC Office of the President, as well as specific guidance or public health orders issued by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), or the local County Health Officer. If available, any pre-existing Business Continuity Plans or Continuity of Operations Plans (such as UC Ready) should be used as a resource for identifying critical functions, critical staff, and inter-dependencies.

Before beginning new research or new phases of existing research, PIs should consider whether the work is essential at this time, and plan for contingencies, should additional controls be enacted at a future date, thereby limiting continuation of said research.