COVID-19 Field Course Protocols

First and Foremost

The health and safety of faculty, staff and students is Western’s number one priority. If a student does not feel safe continuing field course work or has concerns about others placed at risk, please inform the course leader. Keeping a respectful, open dialogue will allow course participants to work together to overcome any concerns and move forward with field course objectives.

Basic guidelines include:

- **PLEASE stay home if you feel sick, if anyone in your household is sick, or you believe you may have encountered an individual known or suspected to be infected. COVID-19 symptoms include:**
  - Cough
  - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
  - Fever
  - Chills
  - Muscle pain
  - Sore throat
  - New loss of taste or smell
- **If you begin to feel unwell while in the field, immediately notify the course leader. Avoid any close contact with other participants and once your class is safely out of the field, go home right away, stay there and contact the Student Health Center 360-650-3400.**
- **Always act as if you have COVID-19 and could spread it.**

Appendix A is provided to help course leaders stay informed about COVID-19 risks and provides links to local, state and federal guideline resources.

COVID-19 Field Course Protocols

Western’s COVID-19 field course protocols are intended to supplement existing risk management protocols that may have been adopted by course leaders as part of their normal planning and preparation for field work. Considerations for general risk management protocols are available online at [Field Course Risk Management Toolkit](#).
Western’s COVID-19 field course protocols are based on Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Washington State Department of Health (DOH) recommendations, and Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) field work protocols. All field course participants will follow social distancing, prevention, and cleaning/disinfecting protocols provided below during all field course operations. Protocols will be revised as University, Washington State, CDC or other directives evolve. This protocol covers the following sections:

A. Safety Kit
B. Hand Hygiene
C. Face Coverings and Disposable Gloves
D. Cleaning and Disinfecting Surfaces
E. Before Departure Orientations
F. General Field Course Activities
G. Extended and Overnight Travel

A. Safety Kit

Items that are required for your personal safety kit for field course work include the following:

- **Face coverings**: A cloth face covering that fits snugly but comfortably against the side of the face, is secured with ties or ear loops, includes multiple layers of fabric while still allowing breathing without restriction and can be washed, laundered and machine dried without damage or change to shape
- **Disposable gloves**: Gloves that can be discarded after each use such as nitrile and latex gloves
- **Hand sanitizer**: An alcohol-based hand sanitizer that has greater than 60% alcohol
- **Disinfecting wipes**: Wipes containing disinfectants that kill germs on surfaces
  - If disinfectant wipes are not available, other options are available as described in Section D below
- **Tissues**: Soft, absorbent, disposable facial tissues used for covering your mouth and nose when nose-blowing, coughing, or sneezing. If tissues are not available, use the inside of your elbow
- **Disposal bags**: A plastic garbage bag or zip lock bags to dispose of used safety kit items, like gloves or tissues
- **Hand soap**: A bar or container of soap for handwashing
- **Portable hand washing system**: 5-gallon bucket with lid, water container with spigot, hand soap in sealable bag or container, disposable paper towels or napkins for drying
- **Safety kit container**: A sealable plastic box or small tote with all necessary safety kit items in sufficient quantities for the duration of the field course work
B. Hand Hygiene

Five steps to wash your hands the right way:

- **Wet** both hands under clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap
- **Lather** hands by rubbing them together with soap. Lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails
- **Scrub** hands for at least 20 seconds *(hum the birthday song two times)*
- **Rinse** hands well under clean, running water
- **Dry** hands using a clean towel or air dry them

Key times to wash hands:

- Before preparing or eating food
- After using the restroom or other shared facilities
- After blowing your nose, coughing, sneezing
- After touching an animal, animal feed, or animal waste
- After removal of any safety kit items
- After touching garbage

Using hand sanitizer:

- Use hand sanitizer, if handwashing is not readily available
- Apply the gel product to the palm of one hand and rub hands together
- Cover all surfaces of hands and fingers and scrub until hands are dry

C. Face Coverings and Disposable Gloves

Using, removing, disposing and cleaning face coverings:

- Face coverings will be used by field course participants when 6 foot social distancing cannot be **consistently** maintained between them, or any other people, whether inside or outdoors
- Local government jurisdictions, e.g. counties, may be more stringent, such as recommending that face coverings be used at all times while in public spaces, regardless of social distancing. Those recommendations should be followed while in that jurisdiction’s public spaces
- Out of an abundance of caution, field course participants may choose to wear face coverings at all times during field course activities, except when a participant is alone
- Remove face covering by grasping ties or elastics of the covering and remove from face without touching the front of the covering. Individuals should be careful not to touch their eyes, nose, and mouth when removing their face covering
- Place face covering in zip lock bag for washing later
- Immediately wash or sanitize hands after removing face covering and securing in bag
- Face coverings should be routinely washed depending on frequency of use, hand washing with soap or a washing machine should suffice
- Course leaders and students should use a minimum of 1 clean face covering per day

Do-it-yourself face covering:

- Materials: Bandana, scarf or square cloth and rubber bands or hair ties

1. Fold bandana in half.
2. Fold top down. Fold bottom up.
3. Place rubber bands or hair ties about 6 inches apart.
4. Fold side to the middle and tuck.
5. 


Using, removing and disposing disposable gloves:

- Please note: Some healthcare professionals say gloves do not give you an added layer of protection and may provide a false sense of security. However, gloves are helpful if they remind you to not touch your face
- Gloves should be worn in public when handwashing or sanitizing is not readily available
- When removing gloves remember glove to glove, skin to skin
○ Using a gloved hand, grasp the palm area of the other gloved hand (not the edge) and peel off first glove
○ Hold removed glove in gloved hand
○ Slide fingers of ungloved hand under remaining glove at wrist and peel off second glove over first glove

- Discard used gloves in your disposal bag
- Immediately wash or sanitize your hands after removing gloves

*Remember that face coverings and disposable gloves are not a substitute for social distancing, washing hands/using hand sanitizer, and cleaning and disinfecting surfaces*

**D. Cleaning and Disinfecting Surfaces**

Cleaning and disinfecting surfaces, including equipment, gear and vehicles:

- **Cleaning** refers to the removal of germs, dirt, and impurities from surfaces. It does not kill germs, but by removing them, it lowers their numbers and the risk of spreading infection
- **Disinfecting** refers to using chemicals to kill germs on surfaces. This process does not necessarily clean dirty surfaces or removes germs, but by killing germs on a surface after cleaning it, it can further the risk of spreading infection
- A list of products EPA-approved for use against the coronavirus can be found here: [https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2](https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household cleaners and disinfectants, including wipes</th>
<th>Bleach solution</th>
<th>Alcohol solutions</th>
<th>Hydrogen Peroxide</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Follow the instructions on the label to ensure safe and effective use of the product.</td>
<td>Mix 5 tablespoons (1/3rd cup) bleach per gallon of water or 4 teaspoons bleach per quart of water. Scrub clean.</td>
<td>Solutions need at least 70% alcohol. Wipe surface wet and clean.</td>
<td>Household solutions are 3% and sufficient. Wipe surface wet and clean.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow the instructions</td>
<td>Let sit 1 min.</td>
<td>Let sit 30 sec.</td>
<td>Let sit 1 min.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conduct routine disinfecting of frequently touched surfaces and objects (e.g. tables, doorknobs, light switches, handles, desks, toilets, faucets, sinks, equipment, tools, and electronics) with cleaners/disinfectants appropriate for their surface, following label instructions.

1. Hard (non-porous) Surfaces:
   - Clean dirty surfaces using a detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection
   - Disinfect surfaces using disinfectant wipes
     - If wipes are not available, use other solutions described above

2. Soft (porous) Surfaces (e.g. carpets, rugs, fabrics, and washable gloves):
   - Clean with appropriate cleaners indicated for use on the surface type
   - Launder items as appropriate in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions

3. Electronics (e.g. cell phones, tablets, keyboards, laptops, touch screens, and controllers):
   - Follow the manufacturer’s instructions for all cleaning and disinfecting products
   - Consider use of wipe-able covers for electronics
   - If no manufacturer guidance, consider using an alcohol-based wipe or spray containing at least 70% alcohol to disinfect touch screens
   - Dry surfaces thoroughly

4. Vehicles:
   - Clean/disinfect surfaces as appropriate for the surface type as outlined above
   - Pay closer attention to high use touched items such as the steering wheel, shift levers, door handles (inside and out), hand grips, arm rests, signal/light levers, dash buttons, and radio buttons

E. Before Departure Orientations

General protocols:

- Course leaders and students must wash or sanitize hands before meeting
- Course leaders and students must wear face covings and disposable gloves per Section C above when unable to maintain 6 foot social distancing from each other
- Course leaders must clean/disinfect frequently touched surfaces and objects
- If possible, utilize the same space consistently and keep it organized and clean

Orienting course participants - extra precaution is advised:

- If course orientation can occur outdoors, that may be preferable
- If orienting more than one person, set different appointment times for each person, if possible
Meet in a space that can accommodate social distancing of 6 feet or more, otherwise face coverings and disposable gloves should be worn per Section C above

Have course materials (including this document) and assigned equipment for each individual ready to go

- If congregating for orientation, course leaders and students must meet in an appropriate meeting space that can accommodate social distancing of 6 feet or more between each person, otherwise face coverings and disposable gloves should be worn per Section C above
  - Course leaders will clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and objects upon entering and exiting the space
  - Have course materials (including this document) and assigned equipment for each individual ready to go
  - No handshakes or elbow bumps to maintain social distancing
  - If traveling together on the elevator to the meeting, maintain a 6 foot distance (~2 people at a time maximum) or have one person take the elevator at a time if this is not possible

- Ask each participant privately, while maintaining social distancing, to attest that they are not sick and are free from
  - Cough
  - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
  - Fever
  - Chills
  - Muscle pain
  - Sore throat
  - New loss of taste or smell

- Equipment, gear and tools
  - Wipe down items with disinfecting wipes before handing to participants

- Electronic devices - including laptops, smartphones and other devices
  - Make sure items are set up prior to leaving
  - Wipe down items with disinfecting wipes before handing to participants
  - Make sure participants understand how to use the devices
  - Verify participants know how to connect online and access applications that will be used

F. General Field Course Activities:

Vehicles:

- Vehicle occupancy:
  - Cars and minivans – Maximum of 2 occupants (driver and one passenger)
• Large passenger vans (12-passenger vans) – Maximum of 3 occupants (driver and 2 passengers)

  • Occupant protocols:
    o Occupants must wear cloth face coverings at all times, unless traveling alone
    o Maximize distance between occupants, sitting behind and diagonally from each occupant
    o Cover coughs and sneezes with upper sleeve or tissue. Dispose of tissue in a zip lock bag
    o If a passenger or driver is sick, they should stay home
    o Wash or sanitize hands before and after riding in the vehicle.
    o Disinfect frequently touched surfaces in the vehicle before and after each use
    o Avoid using the recirculated air option for the vehicle’s ventilation during passenger transport. Use the vehicle’s vents to bring in fresh outside air and/or lower the vehicle windows
    o Individuals at higher risk of illness (older adults or those with serious underlying medical conditions) should consider traveling alone in a vehicle
    o A safety kit container (with required items) and a portable hand washing system or hand sanitizer must be in each vehicle and readily available

• Getting fuel
  o Plan ahead to minimize the number of fuel stops
  o Use extra precaution at all fueling stations, use disinfecting wipes and wear disposable gloves

• Other stops
  o Avoid unnecessary stops where you are more exposed to other people, particularly grocery store or convenience store stops for coffee, beverages, snacks, or meals.

  **Interactions with the general public and local stores should be limited and/or avoided while traveling to the field course site**

Restrooms:
• Use public rest areas where appropriate adding extra precaution
  o Use disinfecting wipes to clean/disinfect any frequently touched surfaces
  o Wash hands thoroughly after and use paper towel to open restroom door on exiting

During field course work:
• Course leaders and students will consistently maintain a 6 foot distance from one another
  o If a 6 foot distance cannot be attained, all participants must wear a face covering and gloves per Section C above
• Course leaders and students will be assigned specific equipment, and their related tasks
  o Keep assigned equipment separate from others
**G. Extended or Overnight Travel**

Some field courses may require travel to course site locations and staying overnight for several days at a time. All course leaders and students must follow social distancing and preventative guidelines and be respectful of local communities and their resources.

- Before departure, course leaders should ask all participants to attest that they are not sick as described in Section E above
- Course leaders and students must follow local community guidelines
  - Do not overcrowd public spaces
  - Maintain a 6 foot distance from people
  - Wash hands frequently or use hand sanitizer
  - Use disinfecting wipes on frequently touched surfaces and objects
  - Wear a face covering and disposable gloves when in public

**Getting groceries:**

- Currently there is no evidence of food or food packaging being associated with transmission of COVID-19
- Participants should prepare food and water for the road. Pack non-perishables in case stores and restaurants are closed
- If able, course leaders and students should obtain groceries prior to leaving
- If participants must get groceries along the way, follow grocery store guidelines on capacities, inventory and maintain a 6-foot distance from other shoppers
  - Wipe down carts and dispose wipes in trash receptacles
  - Use caution when using self-checkout systems
  - Use hand sanitizers in addition to washing hands
  - Be respectful of others, especially workers that have put themselves on the frontlines

**Medications:**

- Participants should bring any prescription medicines that will be needed for the duration of the field course
Getting food to go:

- Currently there is no evidence of food or food packaging being associated with transmission of COVID-19
- If possible, prepare food and water for the road. Pack non-perishables in case restaurants and stores are closed
- Maintain social distancing with other patrons
- Supporting local business seems like a great option, but be mindful of workers and their risks and the potential for spreading the virus
- If you are getting food from a local establishment, take extra precaution
- Call the restaurant ahead of time and ask how they are protecting you and their workers
- If possible, transfer the food to a different container and wash your hands before eating
- **DO NOT** share food or drinks with others

Staying overnight:

Prior to arriving, know your local options and call ahead to book your room or campsite, follow their guidelines

- **Hotels/Motels**
  - Call the hotel/motel prior to departure and ask how they are protecting customers and what guidelines are in place
  - Upon arrival follow check-in guidelines
  - Wear a face covering and disposable gloves while interacting with hotel staff and when entering your room
  - Clean/disinfect any surfaces and objects that are frequently touched like tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, remote controls, toilets, and sink faucets prior to removing your face covering or disposable gloves
  - Avoid any room services during your stay
  - Upon departure, clean/disinfect any surfaces and objects to protect hotel staff

- **Camping**
  - If you are camping during your field course work, be mindful of the campsite facilities and follow guidelines for cleaning and disinfecting commonly used shared space, e.g., restrooms
  - Only one person per tent
  - Follow social distancing guidelines if you encounter other people
  - Wear a face covering and disposable gloves if around other people in public spaces

Be smart and respectful, stay safe and healthy, and follow social distancing and preventative guidelines.
Appendix A

WA State Governor COVID-19 information:
- https://www.governor.wa.gov/issues/issues/covid-19-resources
- https://coronavirus.wa.gov/

Local, state, and federal guidelines:
- Find local health authorities:
  https://www.doh.wa.gov/AboutUs/PublicHealthSystem/LocalHealthJurisdictions
- State guidelines:
  https://www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/Coronavirus
- Federal guidelines:

Western resources:
- Coronavirus information: https://www.wwu.edu/coronavirus
- Field course risk management toolkit: https://rcps.wwu.edu/field-course-safety/
COVID-19 CDC Guidelines: Act as if you have it and could spread it

**NOTE: THERE IS CURRENTLY NO VACCINE TO PREVENT COVID-19**

CDC Resources

- Prevention:
- Social Distancing:
- How to clean and disinfect:
- List of disinfectants for use against the coronavirus:
  [https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2](https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2)
- DIY Cloth Face covering:

CDC Social (or Physical) Distancing Guidelines: *Keeping space between yourself and other people*

Outside of your home:

- Stay at least 6 feet from other people
- Do not gather in groups
- Stay out of crowded places and avoid mass gatherings

How COVID-19 spreads:

- Mainly from person-to-person, particularly those in close contact
- Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks
  - Droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people nearby or possibly inhaled into their lungs.
- Asymptomatic people, those showing no symptoms, may still spread the virus
- Contact with contaminated surfaces or objects
  - A person may get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes.

How to protect yourself and prevent infection:

- **Clean your hands often**
  - Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- Especially after being in public places or blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
  - Wash back of hands, in between fingers, fingertips, under nails, and both sides of wrists
    - No soap or water, use a hand sanitizer containing greater than 60% alcohol
    - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth

- **Avoid close contact**
  - Stay home as much as possible
  - Keep distance between yourself and others, especially around those who are sick

- **Cover your mouth and nose with a cloth face covering when around others**
  - **DO NOT** use a face covering meant for a healthcare worker, such as a surgical mask or N95 respirator
    - These masks are reserved for our healthcare workers and others who have put themselves on the frontlines to protect and take care of us.
  - Asymptomatic people can spread COVID-19
  - Face coverings are not a substitute for social distancing
  - Everyone should wear a cloth face covering while in public

- **Cover coughs and sneezes**

- **Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces**