

University of Pittsburgh

Department of Environmental Health and Safety

Checklist for Temporary Suspension of Laboratory Activities

The University of Pittsburgh Department of Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S) is offering this general checklist of safety related actions that research staff should consider when preparing their laboratory areas for a temporary suspension of activities. The list is not exhaustive but is intended to serve as general guidance for safely suspending your laboratory activity. Specific questions may be addressed to EH&S at ehs.pitt.edu or 412 – 624 – 9505.

Pandemic Preparedness and Social Distancing

- ☐ Prioritize work-at-home arrangements for those researchers that have self-identified underlying health conditions, pregnancy and other risk factors.
- ☐ Reduce lab density of workers in essential lab function to maintain minimum distance of 6 feet between workers
- ☐ Remote work should not include hazardous materials.
- ☐ Chemical and biological reagents and other research supplies should not be shipped to researcher's homes.

Communication

- ☐ Create a "virtual buddy system" for essential personnel. Have personnel call a designated person with planned arrival time and estimated length of time for essential laboratory duties.
- ☐ When working in the laboratory alone, employees should coordinate with a designated colleague in advance and communicate when and how long they will be entering the laboratory, and the off-site buddy should be notified when they exit.
- ☐ Ensure emergency contacts listed on laboratory door signs are up to date. (If necessary post an additional update sheet with date of posting and new contact information).
- ☐ Create a contact list of e-mail addresses, home, and cell phone numbers, including all lab personnel, Principal Investigator, lab and/or department administrator, research operations manager, and building manager.

- ☐ Ensure the contact list is saved where it can be remotely accessed.

Securing Research Activities

- ☐ Secure lab notebooks and other data Take laptops and other personal valuables home.
- ☐ Do not order any new research materials except those items needed to support minimal critical functions.
- ☐ Cancel orders for non-essential research materials if they have not yet shipped.
- ☐ Freeze any biological stock material for long-term storage.
- ☐ Consolidate storage of valuable perishable items within storage units that have emergency power or backup systems.
- ☐ Fill dewars and cryogen containers for sample storage and critical equipment.
- ☐ Ensure all chemicals are capped and stored appropriately. Flammable materials should be placed in flammable storage cabinets.
- ☐ Ensure all chemical containers are labeled appropriately.
- ☐ Ensure controlled substances are locked and secured appropriately.
- ☐ Remove infectious materials from biosafety cabinets and autoclave. Disinfect, or safely store them as appropriate.
- ☐ Ensure all gas valves are closed. If available, shut off natural gas to the area.
- ☐ Turn off and unplug heat sources including but not limited to hot plates, ovens, heating mantles, water baths, and heat blocks.
- ☐ Turn off gas cylinders, remove regulators and replace cylinder caps for all compressed gas cylinders not in use for critical lab activities.
- ☐ Biosafety cabinets: surface decontaminate the inside work area, close the sash and power down. Do NOT leave the UV light on.
- ☐ Chemical fume hoods: Cap all containers. Label all containers. Clear the hood of all hazards and shut the sash.

- ☐ Shut down and unplug sensitive electric equipment.
- ☐ Collect, label, and cap all hazardous chemical waste containers. Segregate incompatible chemicals by means of a physical barrier (e.g., plastic secondary bins or trays).
- ☐ Disinfect and empty aspirator collection flasks.
- ☐ Collect all solid biological waste in red biohazardous waste containers. Seal red bags and boxes if lab activity is suspended.
- ☐ Dispose of any used sharps and broken glass in appropriate sharps containers.
- ☐ Coordinate with DLAR about current animal care recommendations, including coordination of all PI managed daily care to ensure continuity of animal care.
- ☐ Coordinate with building/and or departments to make arrangements to accept critical deliveries and supplies. Non-critical shipments should be cancelled.
- ☐ Do not take any chemical, biological or radiological research materials home.