

Field Safety Guidance (Biological Department, Salisbury University)

The primary objective of our field safety protocol is to ensure the well-being and safety of all personnel involved in fieldwork. The safety of individuals always takes precedence over data collection and research objectives. In any situation that poses a real or potential safety risk, personnel are required to prioritize reaching a safe location or situation, even if this results in a temporary pause or adjustment of research activities.

General Safety Precautions

1. **Buddy System:** Work in pairs or groups whenever possible.
2. **Communication:** Carry a fully charged phone or a two-way radio for emergencies. Share your location and expected return time with someone not on the trip. Make sure that students have immediate contact information of faculty advisors before they go into the field to contact their advisor in case of emergencies. Additionally, make sure the supervisor has the immediate contact information and emergency contact information for all participants.
3. **First Aid Kit:** Carry a first aid kit and be familiar with its contents. Know how to use basic supplies, including bandages, antiseptics, and tools for dealing with cuts, pest bites, or allergic reactions.
4. **Stay Hydrated:** To prevent dehydration during fieldwork, all personnel should bring an adequate supply of water and drink regularly throughout the day. Proper hydration is essential to maintaining alertness and physical well-being, especially in remote or physically demanding environments.
5. **Wear a Safety Vest:** When appropriate, especially during hunting season, wear a brightly colored safety vest, especially if you are near roads, to remain visible to others. Clothing that identifies you with Salisbury University is also recommended (such as an SU Hat or an SU Biology Shirt).
6. **Respect Private Property:** Stay within designated fieldwork areas and avoid trespassing on private property. Always be aware of property boundaries.
7. **Conflict Resolution:** In the event of a conflict or confrontation with members of the public, students are advised to remain neutral, avoid engaging in discussions about complaints, and refer the matter to their supervising faculty member. Students should maintain that they are fulfilling assigned duties and are not in a position to address concerns directly. Conflict resolution should not be delegated to students; instead, they should aim to de-escalate the situation by agreeing politely and then disengaging. Whenever possible, removing themselves from the potential conflict is

the preferred course of action. If at any time during a conflict you feel unsafe, leave and/or call for help. It is not worth endangering yourself to get data, even if you are in the right and the other person is in the wrong.

- 8. Dress appropriately:** Always look up the weather at your field site (it may be different than locally) before going into the field to make sure weather conditions are safe and so you can dress appropriately.
- 9. Carry an identification form and any relevant collecting permits.** A form of ID, such as a driver's license, GullCard, or anything that identifies you with Salisbury University should be available in case you are asked for identification, such as by law enforcement. Make sure to also carry any relevant scientific collecting permits and follow the protocols on those permits.
- 10. Familiarize yourself with the field area:** If this is a new area for you, look up maps online and talk to colleagues who have been to the site to familiarize yourself with the landscape and any potential hazards. If the site is unknown, consider contacting institutional safety officers to identify risks.
- 11. Use SU-labeled vehicles:** When possible, use Salisbury University vehicles for fieldwork to clearly identify your vehicles with the university.
- 12. Faculty advisers are responsible for doing their best to ensure the safety of their supervisees.** Converse with all members of the field team regarding risks and mitigation strategies prior to work and create a field risk management plan that addresses potential risks at the field site. If this is a regular field site or field activity, consider a standard safety protocol. Clarify that there may be elevated risks for certain demographics. Self-educate on the experience of your team member's identity and the field site's local culture, politics, and demographics to better understand potential risks.
- 13. Prohibition of Harassment:** Harassment of any kind, including but not limited to sexual, racial, or other forms of discriminatory behavior, is strictly prohibited in all fieldwork settings. All personnel are expected to uphold a respectful and inclusive environment, recognizing that harassment not only undermines individual dignity and well-being but also compromises the integrity of our research and teamwork. Any incidents or concerns regarding harassment should be reported immediately to a faculty supervisor or appropriate authority. Maintaining a professional and supportive field environment is essential to the safety, comfort, and productivity of all participants.
- 14. In the case of an emergency in the field, call 911.**

Animal Safety

1. Wildlife Awareness:

- **Keep your distance:** Never approach or attempt to feed wild animals, such as deer, foxes, or other wildlife common in the East Coast.
 - **Pest Protection:** Wear tightly woven long sleeves, pants, and pest repellent to protect against ticks, mosquitoes, and other Pests. Tuck pants into socks/boots to reduce the risk of ticks. Ticks can carry Lyme disease, so inspect yourself regularly and brush field clothing off after field work (such as before entering a vehicle or a tent).
 - **Snakes:** Be cautious of venomous snakes like copperheads or rattlesnakes. Avoid tall grasses and rocky areas where they might hide, when possible. When crossing big rocks and logs, step on top of the object first before stepping over it to make sure there isn't a venomous snake on the other side. If bitten, stay calm and seek immediate medical help.
2. **Proper Food Storage:** Keep food sealed in airtight containers to avoid attracting animals like raccoons, squirrels, or other scavengers.
 3. **Follow IACUC protocols:** Make sure to follow any relevant IACUC protocols to ensure the safety of the wildlife and personnel
 4. **Avoid contact with sick or dead animals:** Unless you are prepared for collecting diseased specimens with PPE, avoid contact with sick or dead animals to limit the risk of zoonotic diseases.
 5. **Do not camp or sleep near obvious animal nests or burrows.**

Forest Safety

1. Terrain Awareness:

- Be mindful of uneven or slippery terrain, especially after rain. Wear appropriate footwear with good grip.
- Watch out for tree roots, fallen logs, and loose rocks that can cause tripping or falling.

2. **Tree Hazards:** Avoid setting up workspaces or resting near dead or leaning trees as they may fall unexpectedly.

River and Water Safety

1. Canoeing and Boating Safety:

- **Wear a Life Jacket:** Always wear a life jacket (Personal Flotation Device, PFD) while on or near the water, regardless of your swimming abilities.
 - **Weather Conditions:** Check weather forecasts before going out. Avoid boating in poor weather, high winds, or during storms.
 - **Stay with the Canoe/Boat:** If the boat capsizes, stay with it unless it's safe to swim to shore. The boat can serve as a flotation device.
 - **Paddle Safely:** Be aware of river currents, submerged objects, and low-hanging branches. Avoid paddling in fast-flowing or rough water unless properly trained.
2. **Cold Water Risks:** Cold water can cause hypothermia quickly. If you're working in cold conditions, wear thermal protection and avoid staying in the water for long periods.
 3. **River Crossings:** When crossing rivers on foot, use caution. Test the depth and current strength before crossing, and use a walking stick for balance if needed. To reduce drag from flowing water, walk perpendicular to the flow of the water to cross, so that one leg blocks the flow for the other leg. Take small, slow steps and ensure one foot is firmly planted before moving the other foot. If you fall into the river and are swept away, keep your head above water and upstream, using your hands clasped behind your head to brace it for impact and using your feet to take the impact of obstacles (i.e., rocks, logs) in the river until you find a pool where the current is manageable enough for you to get to shore.

International Field Work Safety

1. **Research the area before arriving, and plan accordingly.** Familiarize yourself and team with the politics, culture, demographics, and laws BEFORE traveling to the region to ensure your safety and to make sure you are in compliance with local laws.

If aspects of your field team's identity puts them at risk in this region, consider a different field site and/or plan a strategy for their safety.

- 2. Ensure you are up to date on relevant vaccines.** Many countries or regions require or recommend vaccines when traveling to/from certain regions, so research the area beforehand to prepare appropriately.
- 3. Different regions have different diseases and risks.** Research the area beforehand to create a strategy for mitigating diseases and risks that you may not be familiar with, such as dangerous wildlife, poisonous plants, or disease-carrying Pests.

Emergency Protocols

- 1. Know Your Location:** Have a map, GPS, or a way to navigate and know where you are at all times. Familiarize yourself with the nearest medical facilities.
- 2. Emergency Contact Information:** Always carry emergency contact numbers, including local authorities, park rangers, or university staff overseeing the fieldwork.

In Case of an Accident: Stay calm, administer first aid if necessary, and call for help. If in a group, designate someone to call for help while others stay with the injured person.