

ESPM field safety committee
Autumn 2024 - revised departmental recommendations

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Supporting training activities available to the whole community:

Building departmental infrastructure and resources:

Tracking field activities in research and teaching:

Advocating for additional resources at the campus level:

Proposed timeline

Phase 1 - Building capacity and improving safety culture, 2024 - 2026

Phase 2 - Developing infrastructure and implementing field safety, 2025 - 2028

Phase 3 - Advocacy for additional campus resources, Ongoing

Summary

Process

After initially presenting ideas in Spring 2024, the Field Safety Committee sought out additional feedback from a range of people in the department within the faculty, staff, and student communities. We also consulted with other departments, the campus EH&S office, and peers at other UC campuses. We received departmental feedback that the initial recommendations were too prescriptive. We now present a revised set of recommendations that are intended to put a reduced labor burden on the faculty and initiate collective effort toward adopting a more robust field safety culture by all department members.

We also obtained independent advice about the potential compliance of these proposals with extant campus policies and federal/state law.

This proposal supersedes the prior proposal. Each item proposed should be considered independently.

Rationale

There is wide support for the goal of promoting positive, inclusive, and safe field outcomes for students and staff, both in the department and on the campus.

There is also a growing awareness about the importance of field safety, both by campus and by external authorities, e.g.:

- The campus/EH&S requirement for a field safety plan for off-campus research and teaching;
- The Cal/OSHA requirement to have an Injury and Illness Prevention Plan (IIPP) for all field research and field teaching;
- The National Science Foundation requirement to submit plans for safe & inclusive off-campus and off-site research (and budget accordingly) in new grant applications.

Other campuses have established extensive safety planning processes, e.g. the travel security management office at UC Davis, and the diving safety office at UC San Diego.

The revised recommendations presented here reflect an effort to provide low-cost, high-effect options for the ESPM community that work best in the department, while also bringing us in line with the changing regulatory environment. **By acting now, we have the opportunity to improve our research outcomes, reduce risk to our faculty and staff, further improve our departmental culture, and to meet the current regulatory environment.**

These recommendations include actions to improve field-based teaching and research activities by:

- Sharing best practices from our peer community that can be voluntarily used;
- Supporting training activities available to the whole community;

- Building departmental infrastructure and resources;
- Tracking field activities in research and teaching;
- Advocating for additional resources at the campus level.

Ongoing evaluation

As field safety requirements, the campus environment, and our department evolve over time, the Field Safety Committee will present updates and further recommendations annually.

Legal and administrative considerations

Regarding whether field safety plans are needed:

- Campus EH&S: “Developing and using a field safety plan is part of the Cal/OSHA requirement of an effective Injury and Illness Prevention Plan (IIPP) for the following activities: Doing field research or teaching field courses off campus, Work or courses involving wildlife (UC Berkeley’s Animal Care and Use Committee (ACUC) will also verify that you have a Field Safety Plan), and Work performed at field stations or nature reserves. Established site procedures may be available, but should be supplemented with a safety plan for potential risks specific to your research or tasks.”
- National Science Foundation, BIO and GEO divisions: Safe and inclusive fieldwork plans will be considered under the Broader Impacts review criterion and must include “a description of the field setting and unique challenges for the team; steps that will be taken to nurture an inclusive off-campus or off-site working environment; communication processes; and organizational mechanisms for reporting, responding to, and resolving issues of harassment, should they arise”.

Regarding legal obligations and risks:

- Redacted in public-facing document

Regarding field safety being a valid topic in merit/promotion decisions:

- Redacted in public-facing document

Proposed actions

Sharing best practices from our peer community that can be voluntarily used:

- A checklist of best practices for teaching classes that have a field component should be shared.
 - The Field Safety Committee would develop this checklist.
 - This checklist would be posted on the ESPM safety webpage and would be an optional resource for instructors to consider using. It would be shared in ESPM 201A (the first year graduate class) and ESPM 375 (the GSI training class). The checklist could potentially be shared in other ESPM methods courses if instructors decide to use it.

- Graduate student prospectuses and annual review forms should be modified to include a question, “Is there fieldwork planned? If yes, has a field safety plan been developed?”
 - This question would initiate a conversation for students and advisors, but there would be no further requirements around compliance beyond those in place at campus level at this time.
 - The best practice would be for an annual check-in between the supervisor and the student on this question and review of any field safety issues.
- The ‘know your rights’ document prepared by the Field Safety Committee should be shared with incoming graduate students in ESPM 201A and posted in Mulford Hall.
- The Field Safety Committee should gather examples of language and budget requests to be used to support NSF Safe and Inclusive Fieldwork (SAIF) Plans, as well as field safety more generally in grant applications, then make these available on our website.
- The field safety plan template should clarify that it is intended to cover all lab members performing field research, including field technicians / staff, non-UC scholars and visiting students, postdocs, Berkeley graduate students, and Berkeley undergraduate researchers.

Supporting training activities available to the whole community:

- The department should commit \$2000/year to paying for expert-provided, in-person safety trainings open to all departmental members.
 - The content of the trainings would be decided by the Field Safety Committee in conversation with other campus stakeholders on a yearly basis.
 - Example topics could include: subsidized wilderness first aid, bystander intervention training, sexual violence prevention, conflict resolution, etc.
- Graduate classes (201A and 375) should include at least one session each on field safety.
 - The Field Safety Committee would volunteer to provide content to instructors, if desired.
 - Two graduate student specific field safety workshops have been created by the Field Safety Committee already.
- Incoming faculty should receive an onboarding training that covers available safety resources and expectations.
 - This would be provided by the department manager following a document developed by the Field Safety Committee.

Building departmental infrastructure and resources:

- The department should obtain a supply of satellite communication devices for shared use.
 - The Field Safety Committee will apply for a ‘Be Smart About Safety’ grant from EH&S to fund equipment plus operations costs for the first few years.
- Other field safety infrastructure in need of pooling may be identified by the Field Safety Committee.

Tracking field activities in research and teaching:

- The department chair could address contributions to field safety, if applicable, in their promotion letters.
 - Candidates could provide relevant information in their statements about this topic, if desired, similar to the way mentoring can now be described by candidates.
 - Field safety would not be considered an independent merit category alongside research, teaching and mentoring, and service, but may be addressed as part of the record of teaching and mentoring--either teaching of courses with field components or mentoring students in field settings.
- The instruction chair should keep an annually updated list of which classes include a field component (defined as any off-campus in-person activity).
- Instructors of field classes should submit a field safety plan to the department manager.
 - Plans would be submitted once when an instructor takes on a class, or voluntarily when substantive changes to field components have been made.
 - The content of these plans would not be pre-set, but could follow the template plans and checklists provided by the department.
 - Verifying the existence of plans would enable the department and campus to make contact with team leads in the case of emergency, and help promote compliance with existing campus/Cal OSHA policies.
- The department manager should, on an annual basis, obtain a list of faculty conducting field research from EH&S and request a field safety plan from each.
 - The content of these plans would not be prescribed, but could follow the template plans and checklists provided by the department.
 - Central collation of plans would enable the department manager and campus to make contact with team leads in the case of emergency, and reduce our liability in the case of an accident.
 - The department should allocate up to \$1000 of work/study funds to assist with the management and secure storage of documents.

Advocating for additional resources at the campus level:

- The department chair should meet with campus leaders to advocate for the hiring of a qualified Travel Security Manager, to be shared across campus or among multiple departments with similar field-based instruction and research.
 - The position's responsibilities would include:
 - Providing expert advice and free consulting on field safety plans;
 - Arranging campus safety trainings;
 - Serving as a point of contact and decision-maker for any emergency situations occurring in research or teaching (e.g., evacuations)
 - The department should offer to contribute up to \$5000/year in salary costs for 5 years for this position.

Proposed timeline

Phase 1 - Building capacity and improving safety culture, 2024 - 2026

1. The Field Safety Committee will develop and share resources for the ESPM community, including best practices.
2. The Field Safety Committee will work with instructors to ensure that at least one session on field safety is incorporated into ESPM 201A and ESPM 375 graduate student courses.
3. The Field Safety Committee will apply for a 'Be Smart About Safety' grant from EH&S to fund a supply of satellite communications devices for shared use.
4. The Field Safety Committee will plan and provide in-person safety trainings and workshops open to all department members to promote safety and wellbeing.
5. The Field Safety Committee will work with the department manager to provide onboarding training to incoming faculty that covers field safety resources and expectations.

Phase 2 - Developing infrastructure and implementing field safety, 2025 - 2028

6. The Field Safety Committee will work with the Instruction Chair to make and maintain an annual list of classes with a field component.
7. The Field Safety Committee will work with the Department Manager to make and maintain an annual list of faculty conducting field research.
8. The Field Safety Committee will work together with ESPM community members to ensure that all field-based classes, research activities and staff are covered by a Field Safety Plan. The Field Safety Committee will work with department staff to ensure a central collation of Field Safety Plans so that they can be accessed in the case of emergency.
9. The Field Safety Committee will provide support for faculty to include field safety in grant budgets.
10. The Field Safety Committee will work to encourage faculty supervisors and graduate students to discuss field safety and include a Field Safety Plan in prospectuses and/or annual reviews.
11. The Field Safety Committee will advise on including contributions to field safety in promotion letters as a component of merit.

Phase 3 - Advocacy for additional campus resources, Ongoing

12. The Field Safety Committee will advocate for the hiring of a qualified Travel Security Manager, to be shared across campus or among multiple departments with similar field-based instruction and research.
13. The Field Safety Committee will collaborate with other departments and campus services to gain additional resources.

14. The Field Safety Committee will continue to identify needs and priorities for the department.