

Cornell continues to closely monitor the outbreak of COVID-19. With the ongoing concern about the spread of this disease, PIs should plan for continuity of essential operations in case of a significant disruption to normal university operations.

Many of you are already well advanced in your planning and we appreciate your rapid response to this evolving situation. Whether your planning is well advanced or just starting, this guidance document provides useful information and topics that you should consider.

Each research lab is best positioned to create a continuity plan that will meet its unique needs. The guidance document is intended to ensure you consider the major issues that confront most research facilities. You may find that some of the considerations do not apply to you or you have specific additional concerns or considerations that should be included in your plan.

### **Research Continuity Guidance for Laboratories and Research Facilities**

As you develop a plan for your research group, we ask you to consider the following:

- Essential research infrastructure, such as power and telecommunications, will be maintained.
- The Cornell Center of Animal Resources and Education, CARE, and Environmental Health & Safety, EH&S, will maintain critical functions.
- Orders for critical supplies may be delayed, and shipping/receiving functions may be interrupted by company and university closures.
- Core facilities and other fee-for-service resources may be limited in services, or not be available for a period of time.
- Assess and prioritize critical laboratory activities.
- Identify personnel able to safely perform essential activities.
- Identify procedures and processes that require regular personnel attention (e.g. cell culture maintenance, animal studies (see also CARE communications), plant care, etc.), identify who will do what functions and include a backup/designee plan in case main personnel become unable to work
- Maintain a sufficient inventory of critical supplies that may be impacted by global shipping delays. Limited storage facilities such as freezers and especially liquid nitrogen cooled freezers should be surveyed to ensure there is space for transfer

or storage of reagents and samples, if an emergency were to arise. It may be necessary to discard non-critical items to create sufficient storage.

- Identify any research experiments that can be ramped down, curtailed, or delayed.
- Ensure that you have access to contact information for your critical staff, confirm with staff how will you stay in communication (e.g., Slack, text, email, etc.).
- Cross-train research staff to fill in for others who may be out sick or unable to come to work.
- Review contingency plans and emergency procedures with researchers and staff.
- Consider installing remote control monitoring devices for critical equipment (e.g., -80C freezers, liquid nitrogen storage dewars, incubators).
- Develop a plan for preserving experiments with model organisms (other than the animals within the CARE plan). It is important for each individual research entity to consider the requirements for maintaining their models, if daily care and maintenance were not possible.
- Plan now for return to normal operations – what needs to happen, who will do what functions, and planned communication to others for returning to full operating capacity.
- Avoid performing high-risk procedures alone. When working alone is necessary, exercise maximum caution, and use check-ins with another person before and after performing the work.
- Ensure that high-risk materials (radioactive, biohazards, chemicals) are secured.
- Consider Impact on Studies Involving Human Participants - In the event of a complete or partial university shutdown, disruptions could occur in planned visits with research participants enrolled in research studies. It is imperative that the safety of research participants is ensured. Work with the IRB and any involved external partners to develop contingencies plans as applicable. A few points that should be considered are:

**Grant Related Guidance:**

- Policies in place for all university employees, such as paid time for quarantine, are applicable to employees funded by sponsored awards. We anticipate that these costs will be allowable on sponsored awards. Departments and principal investigators may contact Sponsored Financial Services ([sfs-help@cornell.edu](mailto:sfs-help@cornell.edu)), if there are further questions regarding expense allowability in the event of this infectious disease-related emergency.

- OSP has developed a web page (<https://researchservices.cornell.edu/news/coronavirus-updates-federal-agencies>) which will be updated as we receive further information on allowable expenses and other questions regarding sponsored awards.