

Best Practices for Field Work

Please remember that *anyone doing field work is representing the University of Washington to the public*. This requires a higher standard of conduct in terms of both following rules and field etiquette. Improper behavior can also ruin access for University of Washington researchers who follow rules or misrepresent the value of field research to the public.

Please keep the following safety considerations and etiquette in mind:

Property Access

Never work or recreate on private property or cross fence lines without permission. Obtain required collecting and camping permits well ahead. Follow up with a report and appreciation following field work that requires permission.

Work and Route Plan

Leave a work and route plan with a department administrator. This is critical for enabling prompt response to emergencies that require contacting people in the field to get back home.

Communications

Work in pairs or maintain communication with others in group if on your own.

Water Purification

Have a plan for effective water purification and know the water contamination issues for the area in which you will be working.

Ten Essentials

Bring along the ten essentials, listed below. If you are relying solely on GPS for navigation, remember to bring spare batteries.

- Navigation (map and compass, GPS)
- Sun protection (sunglasses and sunscreen)
- Insulation (extra clothing)
- Illumination (headlamp/flashlight)
- First-aid supplies
- Fire (waterproof matches/lighter/candles)
- Repair kit and tools
- Nutrition (extra food)
- Hydration (extra water)
- Emergency shelter

First Aid and Medical Safety in the Field

It is advisable for at least one person on outdoor or challenging field trips to have basic first aid certification.

We recommend that tetanus and hepatitis shots be current.

Exposure to Animal and Insect-Borne Diseases in the United States

Research that may involve working with, or exposure to bites from, bats and other wild animals increase the risk of contracting rabies. Working in areas inhabited by rodents increase the risk of contracting hantavirus. Working in a tick infested area increases the risk of Lyme disease. For more information on prevention and detection of these diseases, and for a more complete list of risks involving animals and insects in the field, contact the Occupational Health Nurse at Environmental Health and Safety, (206) 543-7388. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) website (www.cdc.gov) is also a good resource for general information.

Food is a common attractor of animals and improper cooking and storage practices can lead to increased risk of animal attacks. Many areas now require and rent bear resistant containers. Cooking and eating should not be done close to where you sleep. After finishing a meal, clean all dishes and utensils thoroughly and, if possible, suspend them and your cook stove. All food must be stored in either a container or suspended high between two trees (ideally). When cooking fish or meat, be careful that your clothes do not absorb the food odors and thereby attract wild animals.

Driving and Vehicles

Anyone driving a UW vehicle must abide by specific rules and regulations. Some of the greatest hazards in field work arise during the drive to a site and back. It is therefore important to check road laws and traffic conditions, as many accidents nationwide are caused by drivers unfamiliar with the terrain. Automobile clubs, such as AAA, and state websites often provide traffic information guides. The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety website (www.hwysafety.org/laws.htm) also provides an excellent summary of traffic and road condition information for all fifty states. Remember to limit or avoid cell phone use while driving, especially in unfamiliar vehicles and on unfamiliar roads.

Never leave valuables in vehicles parked at trail heads or camp grounds.