Montana Tech Levels of Research Operations for COVID-19 Emergency

Level 0: Normal

- Normal operations

Level 1: Caution and Preparation for Modified Operations

- Social distancing (i.e., 6 ft perimeter) required. Lab occupancy limited to three persons at a time for large labs.
- Frequently sanitize surfaces and items handled by more than one person.
- Teleworking encouraged when possible. Work with supervisor and HR for approval.
- Consider slowing down and/or temporarily halting data acquisition and/or transitioning to a mode of data analysis and report writing, if possible.
- If you cannot reasonably slow down or halt a study, develop a written plan you follow to manage work during Level 2 research operations. Level 2 might be declared with little notice.
  - These written plans do not need to be formally submitted during Level 1, but you are encouraged to consult with your supervisor, staff and/or the Office of Research with questions. Be ready to submit the plan, if you need to request an approved exception during Level 2.
  - Plan Template available as Appendix A
- Include how key laboratory functions or field activities that must remain in working order will be handled for your research to survive a prolonged shutdown (e.g., cell lines, equipment needing liquid nitrogen, etc.).
- Include how hazards can be eliminated or controlled through a prolonged shutdown (for example chemical reactions that evolve over time; fume hood operation).
- Include mitigation plans to prevent loss of critical supplies, reagents and other materials.
- Determine if you can work without certain shared campus resources being available (i.e., mail room, accounting services, janitorial work, routine pick-ups, etc.).
- Work with IT proactively to ensure key members of your research team can access data remotely, if campus access is limited (e.g. VPN).

Level 2: Modified Operations with Approved Exceptions

- Lab or field-work research must slow down or shut down plan, unless a request for exemption from slowdown is submitted to department head or director and Office of Research within 24 hours of the announcement of Level 2.
  - This plan must designate no more than three lab members as essential staff.
  - This plan must outline procedures (e.g., rotations, driving separate vehicles, etc.) to ensure social distancing.
- No new experiments may start, unless approved by Office of Research.
- Essential experiments allowed under guidance of an approved plan (see Appendix A) – those experiments that, if discontinued, would lead to significant financial or data loss; or experiments which are contributing to solving the situation.
- All research buildings will be locked and should only be accessed by the PI and lab members designated as essential staff. Do not prop open any doors or allow anyone that is non-essential to piggyback in.
- Maintenance and access to key shared resources continue under appropriate guidelines and approved plans (i.e., plants, cell lines, liquid nitrogen, etc.)

Level 3: Mandatory Shutdown with VCR Approved Exceptions

- Mandatory laboratory and field-work shutdown for all research labs, except exceptions approved by the Vice Chancellor for Research.

Level 4: Mandatory Shutdown with Chancellor-Approved Exceptions

- Mandatory laboratory and field-work shutdown for all research groups, unless designated as an exception by the Vice Chancellor for Research and the Chancellor.
APPENDIX A: Response Plan for Level 2, 3, and 4 Research Operations

Laboratory Principal Investigator(s):

Name: ___________________ Dept/Center: ___________________ Phone: _____________

Name: ___________________ Dept/Center: ___________________ Phone: _____________

Laboratory or Group Name and Location(s):

Laboratory/Group Purpose or Name: ___________________________________________________________________________

Building(s): ______________________________________________________________________________________________________

Room Number(s): ____________________________________________________________________________________________________

1. Are you able to transition all of your team (i.e., postdocs, students and staff) to remote work for at least the next 15 days* (i.e., data analysis, data interpretation, writing, literature review, etc.)?

   o YES
   o NO

* Please recognize that the 15 days is a minimum, but the laboratory shutdown may be longer. You will always have a chance to revisit this form and update.

If YES, sign and date this form, and provide a copy to your supervisor and the Office of Research.

Signature: ___________________ Date: ___________________

If NO, continue to Question 2.

2. Are you able to transition some of your team to remote work for at least the next 15 days* (i.e., data analysis, data interpretation, writing, literature review, etc.)?

   o YES
   o NO

List the team members that you are able to transition to remote work and provide a short description of what you've asked each member to work on. Be sure to abide by contract terms and consult with Human Resources with any questions.

[Feel free to expand this field or attach a document/plan]

List the team members that you are NOT able to transition to remote work, and provide a short description of what your plan is (i.e., leave options, temporary layoff, appeal as essential staff and seek approval for continued in-laboratory work, etc.). Be sure to abide by contract terms and consult with Human Resources with any questions.

[Feel free to expand this field or attach a document/plan]
3. Would closing your laboratory or field-work lead to significant financial or data loss?

- YES
- NO

If NO, please sign and date this form, provide a copy to your supervisor and the Office of Research, and temporarily halt studies until research operations return to Level 1 as designated by the Vice Chancellor for Research.

Signature: ___________________________  Date: ___________________________

If YES, please proceed to Question 4.

4. Briefly describe the research activities that need to continue. Are they contributing to mitigating the current emergency? Provide a plan to ensure social distancing (i.e., 6 ft perimeter from other humans during work), surface and equipment sanitizing, and other recommended measures to mitigate risk of COVID-19 exposure and transmission. Identify up to 3 trained laboratory or field work members as “essential staff” who will maintain the work/equipment etc. Describe additional mitigation plans to ensure safe and responsible conduct of the research during this limited access (if granted). Finally, acknowledge that there could be additional disruptions to other campus and non-campus services that could further disrupt your mitigation plan, and that you will update this plan regularly, if such circumstances arise.

[Feel free to expand this field or attach a document/plan]

Signature: ___________________________  Date: ___________________________
Research Operation Approvals for
Level 2 Plan, Level 3 Plan, or Level 4 Plan
Administrative Signatures

Name or Brief Description of Research Activity:

**Level 2 Plan Authorization:**
Department Head or Director:
Name: ______________________ Signature: ______________________ Date: _________________
Vice Chancellor for Research:
Beverly K. Hartline Signature: ______________________ Date: _________________

**Level 3 Plan Authorization:**
Department Head or Director:
Name: ______________________ Signature: ______________________ Date: _________________
Vice Chancellor for Research:
Beverly K. Hartline Signature: ______________________ Date: _________________

**Level 4 Plan Authorization:**
Department Head or Director:
Name: ______________________ Signature: ______________________ Date: _________________
Vice Chancellor for Research:
Beverly K. Hartline Signature: ______________________ Date: _________________
Chancellor:
Les P. Cook Signature: ______________________ Date: _________________

Comments: