

## Preparation Checklist for Research Laboratory Operations

As the University continues to prepare for and respond to the COVID-19 public health emergency, researchers are reminded that EH&S is an essential function of the University, and is actively preparing for continuity of services. At this time, EH&S services (waste management, emergency response, training, etc.) and functions will continue, with necessary adjustments to frequency or depth of service, as needed, based on staffing.

In parallel, it is each Principal Investigator's responsibility to prepare his/her lab and equipment. EH&S strongly urges laboratories to take the following steps to ensure the safety and security of their research operations, and specifically to prepare for potentially significant staffing shortages.

### Hazardous Materials (biological, chemical, radioactive and compressed gases)

- Prepare for the possibility of delays in waste management services. Ensure adequate stocks of containers are available, and adequate space is provided to safely store waste that is labeled and closed.
- While EH&S expects and plans to continue chemical waste and radiological waste services, both these and regulated medical waste services may be adjusted, based on staffing. Any such changes will be communicated to the research community.

### Critical Equipment

- Establish a plan to support critical equipment such as freezers, incubators and cell storage dewars. Consider installing remote monitoring devices, and ensure that personnel are identified to respond to notification events.
- Verify and update, as necessary, Emergency Contact information posted outside of your lab entrance and on any critical equipment. While there is no guarantee, in the event of critical equipment failure, emergency contact information may enable the University to contact a researcher.

### Research Operations

- Identify tasks that require on-site support, such as cell culture maintenance and animal studies, and ensure personnel are assigned, as needed.
- Identify non-essential research activities that can be delayed or suspended and prioritize, as needed.
- Limit or shut-down unattended research operations, especially those involving hazardous materials. Be aware that emergency response capabilities may be concurrently impacted. Securely store all chemicals, biological materials and compressed gases prior to leaving the laboratory.
- Adequately supply and refresh inventory of critical supplies that may be impacted by shipping delays.
- Verify that specialty devices that require supportive materials, such as glove boxes, are adequately supplied.

### Personnel

- Cross-train research staff to fill in for others who may be out sick or unable to come to work and ensure these staff have the appropriate training.
- Ensure that individuals performing critical tasks have been adequately trained and understand whom to contact with technical or safety questions.
- Utilize a "buddy system" whenever possible, and notify others if working alone.

Please **discuss contingency plans** with your laboratory personnel in case there are interruptions to transportation or other conditions that may impact one's ability to keep a normal work schedule.

For questions while you are preparing your lab, please contact EH&S at [labsafety@columbia.edu](mailto:labsafety@columbia.edu), [biosafety@columbia.edu](mailto:biosafety@columbia.edu), and [rso-ehrs@columbia.edu](mailto:rso-ehrs@columbia.edu), or by phone at:

- Medical Center – (212) 305-6780
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