

# Guidelines for Fieldwork During the COVID-19 Pandemic

## Scope

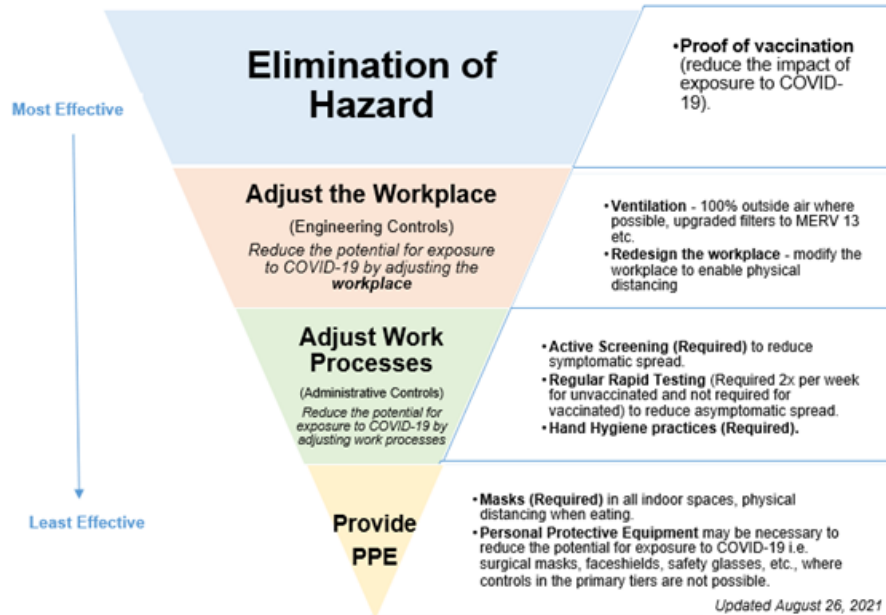
The guidelines outlined in this document will assist in the development of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) related to **Fieldwork** and will help to ensure the appropriate COVID-19 health and safety considerations for the protection of all members of the McMaster community.

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## Hierarchy of Hazard Control

Hazard mitigation should always focus on implementing control measures to eliminate or reduce risk. For this purpose, the hierarchy of controls must be considered. This hierarchy can be applied to any hazard in the workplace including COVID-19. A brief overview of this concept is highlighted below.



## Standard Guidelines for Fieldwork

- Participation must be entirely voluntary.
- All researchers must conduct daily screening using the MacCheck digital tool. If individuals are feeling unwell in any way or are advised to initiate further medical follow up on completion of the self-assessment tool, they should immediately refrain from fieldwork, return home and self-isolate as soon as possible. Other team members should be able to continue field work as long as they have always strictly adhered to distancing and cleaning requirements and are not working alone.
- All research team members must also know how to access the nearest hospitals and emergency medical services.
- The research team must be able to monitor, on a daily basis, any new directives from public health officials, police or McMaster administration for the area they are in.
- You must have a contingency plan for any team member to return home in the event they cannot continue their work for any reason.

## Face Coverings and Masks

Please refer to both the [Vehicle Use Guidelines](#) and the [Guidelines/Protocols for Face Coverings and Masks During COVID-19 Pandemic](#) for information on face covering protocols while traveling and in the field.

## Physical Distancing while Working and Traveling

### Screening and Tracking

All researchers must complete the MacCheck digital tool daily. If a researcher is feeling unwell in any way they are to stop work, inform their team and supervisor immediately, and complete the [Government of Ontario COVID-19 self-assessment tool](#). The results of this tool will determine next steps for that person.

Researchers must adhere to all regional requirements for screening. In Hamilton, all individuals must complete the MacCheck digital tool no more than 1 hour before attending the work site.

Keep detailed records of where and when you have traveled, who you have travelled with, and the locations of the fieldwork such that tracking can be provided to the local public health unit should a researcher become ill with COVID-19.

## Vehicles

### *Travel Guidelines*

- Review restrictions by Canadian and Provincial Governments regarding travel within the province and across Canada (see below)
- Do not travel with more than one person in a car or pickup truck (driver + passenger) where physical distancing cannot be maintained. If restricted to a single vehicle in specific situations, a detailed plan for exposure prevention must be outlined in the fieldwork risk assessment as to why only one vehicle can be used. Consideration in your assessment must also include transportation availability should any individual need to leave for any reason and specifically if becoming ill.
- Up to three people (driver + 2 passengers) may travel in a large van with 3 or more rows of seats where the two individuals can sit at least 2 m apart. The car ventilation should be set to fresh air only (no recirculation of air) and if possible, windows should be open to maximize air flow.
- Non-surgical masks must be worn by each individual while in the vehicle
- Eliminate clutter in the vehicles and organize gear to limit the contact between belongings and to make cleaning easier. Have a garbage bag in the cab of the vehicle.

- Research teams must have access to essential services, including grocery stores, gas stations, etc. Only one team member should be tasked with accessing these services and should do so with limited frequency. If physical distancing is not achievable and hand hygiene is not available, then a surgical mask and gloves must be used while accessing these services.

### *Hygiene*

- Handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use of alcohol-based hand sanitizer should be performed immediately before and after each vehicle ride.
- Team members must have appropriate supplies to thoroughly and regularly clean vehicle surfaces and equipment, including before any use by other team members. Supplies should include disinfectant wipes, disposable gloves for use in cleaning and disinfection, disposable garbage bags, hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol, and paper towels.
- Before each trip, clean or disinfect the frequently touched surfaces including door handles, seatbelt buckles, steering wheels, etc. in the vehicle.
- Follow the manufacturer's guidelines on the use of the cleaning/disinfecting products and wear disposable gloves if necessary.
- Proper training on donning and doffing gloves is necessary if gloves are required. After removal of gloves appropriate hand hygiene must be conducted.
- Avoid unnecessary contact with frequently touched surfaces such as door frames/handles, seatbelt buckles, steering wheel, etc.
- Trucking rest stops present a possible exposure risk – review IHSA documents in the Resources section at the end of this document. Washrooms, gas pump handles, countertops, keypads, etc. are areas of possible exposure. Hand wash or sanitize after touching these surfaces. Avoid the use of cash whenever possible.
- When refilling the vehicle, wipe down gas pump handles, touch pads and other highly touched surfaces before use. If this is not possible, wash hands or use sanitizer after use.
- Everyone should handle their own personal bags and belongings during loading and unloading.

### **Site Access and Procedures**

- Do not engage in any field research where you cannot maintain appropriate physical distancing (2m). This must be followed both within Ontario and outside of Ontario.
- Physical distance (2m) must be maintained between any individual, including other team members. At the same time, field workers should not work alone.
- Access to restricted areas as mandated by Provincial Governments and Indigenous Communities must be adhered to. If access to restricted areas is essential, authorization

and documents must be obtained from the appropriate bodies. Keep these documents on you at all times during the fieldwork.

- Do not engage in any field research requiring face to face discussions with members of the public, unless physical distancing can be maintained.

## **In the Field**

### *Accommodations*

- All research team members must have individual accommodations during overnight stays.
- Bedding (unless using hotel accommodations), clothing, and other personal supplies must be bagged and kept separate from that of others
- Launder clothes and shower as soon as possible upon arriving home.
- Meals must allow for appropriate distancing and avoid sharing of any utensils including large spoons, tongs, etc.

### *Handling documentation, reports, and paperwork*

- Use technology for communication as much as possible (e.g., text messaging and mobile phones) rather than having in-person conversations.
- Where possible, use technology to send and receive paperwork (e.g. scanning equipment).
- Do not share pens, notebooks, computers, etc. but provide each researcher with their own supplies where possible.
- Clean and disinfect all equipment used each day using soap and water, if possible, or disinfectant wipes. Remove gloves and wash hands once the cleaning of equipment is complete.

## **Resources**

- Public Health Ontario [COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool](#)
- Public Health Agency of Canada [Travel Restrictions and Exemptions](#)
- Public Health Agency of Canada [Prevention and Risks](#)
- [IHSA Vehicle cleaning guidelines](#)
- [IHSA Guidance on Cleaning and Sanitizing Inside your Vehicle During COVID-19](#)
- [Handwashing](#)

- McMaster University [RMM 801 Field Trips, Student Placements and Research Activity Planning and Approvals Program](#)
- Commute Ontario <https://commuteontario.ca/carpooling-guidance>