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**Guidelines for Working in the Laboratory with Only Essential Personnel During the UofSC Closure due to COVID-19**

There are currently work-related restrictions on UofSC personnel in accordance with guidance from Federal and State government offices, and University officials. The following general guidelines should be considered when performing authorized essential tasks in the laboratory during the UofSC closure.

Working in the laboratory inherently carries risks. These risks include hazardous materials or equipment that may be used or stored. During this university closure, additional risks exist due to the following:

* Buildings are on restricted access – few people, if any, are in the building.
* Many staff are working remotely from home. Your supervisor and coworkers may not be physically present to assist you if an emergency arises.
* Emergency response from the City of Columbia, UofSC Police Department and EH&S may take more time than usual due to resources being diverted to COVID-19 related services.
* Services provided by the Department of Facilities are also limited.

To improve safety while performing essential research activities in the laboratory during the closure, it is important to consider these guidelines as a supplement to your lab’s continuity of operations plan:

* It is preferable from a safety perspective to have two essential personnel present in the laboratory while maintaining social distancing requirements whenever possible.
* Labs should limit experiments to those that have a low probability and severity of potential incidents, unless higher risk work has been approved as essential by your department.
* Inform your supervisor daily of the time you will work in the lab. Send email and text when you arrive and when you leave the lab.
* Arrange for a “buddy”, another essential lab personnel who can be physically present in the vicinity of your work area while you are in the lab. Depending on the length of time you work, establish a frequency by which you will check-in with your “buddy”. It can be every 30 minute or every hour depending on the type of work that you do. Establish the length of time after you fail to check-in that your “buddy” will check on you physically. You may decide that your “buddy” try to call you 5 minutes after you fail to check-in and look for you if you cannot be reached.
* Perform only the essential tasks that were previously identified by your Principal Investigator.
* Ensure that you have a cell phone and charger on hand every time you work in the lab.
* Have your emergency contacts saved on your phone. Add (803) 960-0169 (Radiation Safety) and (803) 622-3737 (Biosafety) if your essential work involves radioactive or biological agents, respectively.
* If high risk materials are required for your essential research (examples include but are not limited to HF, toxic and/or flammable gases, reactions that may potentially lead to a fire and/or explosion, or hazardous equipment that can cut, pinch or crush) contact Jocelyn Locke at (803) 351-9874.