# COVID-19: Resumption of all Research Activities

*These guidelines are subject to change to align with directives from the Governor, Nevada Health, NSHE Chancellor, and UNLV President.*

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**Overview:** The following guidance is provided for all principal investigators (PIs) and researchers who are directly responsible for ensuring the safe and ethical conduct of research. This includes use and upkeep of all laboratories and research spaces to ensure that procedures adhere to the current COVID guidelines outlined by the CDC, State of Nevada, and the Southern Nevada health district. The following document is meant to provide a starting point for maintaining general safety guidelines in the research spaces for faculty, graduate, undergraduate students, postdocs and researcher professors as research activities fully resume.

**GUIDELINES:**

The local COVID-19 mitigation plan will expire June 1, allowing for the return of pre-pandemic guidelines that lift restrictions involving capacity limits and large gatherings. All research activities impacted by these mitigation plan will be resumed as of June 1 allowing higher research capacity. Guidance regarding social distancing and masks are provided below:

**Social Distancing:** Social distancing is the purview of the PI. Although the current guidelines do not require social distancing, the PI may adapt more stringent requirements including PPE and social distancing within the Laboratory or during field work.

**Masks**: The new CDC guidance on masks recommends that those who are not vaccinated continue wearing masks and following social distancing and other precautions until fully vaccinated. The guidance allows fully vaccinated people to stop wearing face coverings in crowds and in many indoor locations. More guidance about masks is on the CDC's website at https://bit.ly/3ftHiNU.

Opening all research activities will allow an increase in lab occupation (e.g. graduate and undergraduate students), the resumption of all human subject related research (IRB approved), and field work beginning June 1, 2021.

The following guidelines will not be required as of June 1, 2021, but remain the purview of the Principal Investigator (PI) and can be included in safety standard operating procedures (SOPs) moving forward with regard to overall lab safety and operations. PIs will be required to provide updated safety SOPs that will be approved by chairs and deans using the same procedures that have been in place since the initial shut down.

The goal is to ensure that the Principal Investigators (PIs) define the safety protocols required for their lab as of June 1,2021, the required PPE, and the corresponding safety training required for incoming staff, graduate, and the undergraduate researchers prior to their return.

**The following are noted as part of the previous guidance for the following areas:**

The continuation of these guidelines is the purview of the PI and should be noted in the Safety SOP for the laboratory.

**Maintain Good Personal Hygiene:**

Generally, the following is good practice within a laboratory setting:

1. Wash/sanitize hands frequently. At a minimum this includes when entering and before leaving a laboratory.
    a. When available, use soap and water and scrub hands in their entirety for 20 seconds.
    b. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer and cover all hand surfaces and rub until dry.
2. Cough/sneeze into a tissue. Dispose of used tissues immediately into a trashcan and then wash hands.
    a. If there are no tissues available, cough/sneeze into the crook of your elbow, not your hands.
3. Avoid touching your face, eyes, nose, and mouth. This can accelerate the spread of infection.
4. Wear personal protective equipment, as appropriate in the laboratory. At a minimum this is safety glasses. However, laboratory coats, gloves, and face coverings are also recommended.

**Cleaning/Disinfecting High-Touch Locations and Equipment in the Laboratory:**

The continued cleaning and disinfection of laboratories is at the discretion of the PI in charge of the space. The following bulleted list of locations and equipment are examples of high-touch areas in the laboratories that PIs may want to continue cleaning on a regular basis.

- Common use benchtops and desktops
- Equipment handles and latches
- Computers, keyboards, and mouse attached to instrumentation

- Equipment controls and touchpads
- Drawer, cabinet, refrigerator, and freezer handles
- Bin and water incubator lids
- Hand tools, micro-pipettors.
- Faucet handles and sprayer grips
- Chemical bottles and lids
- Chair backs and armrests
- Pens, and whiteboard markers
- Balances and weighing tools
- Shared phones in the laboratory

***NOTE:*** *Campus Custodial will continue to clean and disinfect public and common areas such as hallways and restrooms with their disinfection protocols. However, custodial staff will not clean surfaces and equipment in laboratories. Therefore, the task will fall on the laboratory personnel and users of the equipment to ensure it has been disinfected and is ready for operation.*

**Other Safety Considerations:**

As with any laboratory work, individuals must be trained in performing critical tasks and should have access to any personal protective equipment necessary to perform these tasks. If social distancing will be required it is important that high-risk tasks should not be performed alone in a laboratory. In fact, individuals should not work alone in a laboratory and other colleagues or supervisors should be aware and provide check-ins as necessary.