



Office of the Vice Provost for Research

To: Penn Research Community
From: Dawn Bonnell, Vice Provost for Research
Date: March 23, 2020
Re: **Supporting Essential Functions with Safety**

Thank you for your efforts to expeditiously ramp down our research programs at Penn. As the situation evolves, it is becoming evident that the impact of the epidemic will last longer than a couple of weeks. It is possible it will last for months and we are planning for this eventuality.

I recognize that this situation has caused real impact on research that is of concern to faculty, staff, students and post docs. Some progress will be slowed, and setbacks will occur. We are constantly monitoring the situation and digesting the latest advice from the CDC and other authorities. As soon as it becomes safe to reconvene, we will all work together to find paths to minimize these impacts on your research trajectories.

As the university moved to restrict operations to essential functions only, the schools have developed processes to decide which processes and personnel are essential. As essential functions and personnel are evaluated, I want to emphasize that the overarching principle is that, the threshold for this designation should be set very high as we contemplate a period of reduced operations that could extend into months. As a result, the number of faculty, staff, and trainees permitted on campus will be small.

Some have expressed safety concerns associated with onsite work during reduced operations. Such concerns are understandable during this unique situation. Despite this uncertainty, we remind the community that the campus safety infrastructure remains in place, that social distancing is possible on the depopulated campus, and that normal safety protocols in research should continue to be practiced as usual.

The University supports the highest standards of safety for its personnel and for research standards. Any concerns you have related to personal or lab safety should be discussed with your advisor or supervisor, your graduate group chair or department chair. In addition, you should feel free to reach out to [Environmental Health and Radiation Safety \(EHRS\)](#) or [Public Safety](#) directly.

Some offices and practices that support safe research are listed here.

- Since the campus is depopulated, social distancing is more straightforward here than in many other venues. We should all obey the 6 ft rule and continue to wash hands frequently while on campus as we do elsewhere.
- To maximize social distancing, avoid mass transit, if possible. To support us in this regard Penn parking is now open to those without parking stickers at a reduced cost. (See the table below)
- In some types of research, a buddy system is a mandated safety protocol under normal conditions. All safety practices relevant to research activities must be meticulously adhered to during reduced operations, while maintaining social distancing.

- Some groups are adopting extra cleaning protocols for hard surfaces in the labs. In order to incorporate extra cleaning protocols in the lab, contact your building administrator for supplies.
- The Division of Public Safety continues to provide the same high-level safety and security services to the Penn Community. Penn Police are patrolling and responding to calls for services; Allied Universal security officers continue to be deployed in buildings and on street patrol.
- Campus buildings are now accessible only to those with Penn ID cards.
- Fire and Emergency services continue to work with FRES, ULAR, EHRS, BSD, etc., on responding to all life safety issues, including lab incidents.
- EHRS continues to have radiation safety and emergency response teams on campus.
- Should anyone working on campus have any safety/security concerns they should call Department of Public Safety (DPS) 215-573-3333 to let the staff know their location and concern. DPS staff will respond immediately.