

Physics department guidelines and plans for reopening laboratory research

(Revised from a previous document to reflect new OSU rules reporting protocols.)

Overview: OSU has a comprehensive plan for resumption of on-site activity during the COVID-19 pandemic [1]. OSU is in a “modified operations” phase as of 7/14/2020 per Vice Provost for Student Affairs Dan Larson. The College of Science Resumption Plan [2] has information specific to our College. On-site research in OSU’s Physics Department is currently limited to approved resumption plans on file with the departmental office, and to limited “one-off access” approved by the department head. All others are to stay home. The present document describes procedures in place in the Physics Department to comply with University and College mandates and takes no stance on whether or when a return to research or other on-site activities should occur. The document is guided by the values and principles listed at OSU’s “Keep Researching” website [3].

This document describes processes to maximize the productivity of research labs while minimizing COVID exposure risk to the lab workers, and maximizing ability to report and recover in the event of an outbreak.

Return to Research (R2R) working group: Physics has a working group (current members listed in header) to liaise with the college and to help department research PIs and other department members who need to use Weniger Hall on a regular basis to prepare the [necessary plans](#) [4] to reestablish research activities. Feedback is welcome and should be directed to Janet Tate or any member of the R2R working group.

Most activities should remain ‘at home’: Any work that can be done from home, should be done from home. Meetings - research groups, committees, defenses and orals, one-on-one - should remain virtual. Lab workers will continue to do computer work at home. Computers brought home for the isolation period should remain at home. Faculty whose work requires specialized on-site equipment or attending to instrumentation should sign up for on-site work shifts just like their lab workers.

Required training & adherence: We will follow the guidelines established by the CDC and summarized by OSU EH&S [5]. All lab workers must take the “Pandemic, slowing the spread” training module [6], and pass the test before returning to work and review other available modules on the /coronavirus EHS page.

Building occupancy and shift work: Since limited resumption on 6/18/20, Physics contributes about 10 people per day and about 40 people-hours per day (less on weekends) to the Weniger Hall building occupancy. This low density appears to ensure that people seldom come into contact, and face coverings are to be worn in all places where an encounter with a second person is possible.

- We will target 1 person per room if at all possible, and 1 person/300 sq. ft in larger rooms.
- We will work shifts to minimize density of occupants and reduced work hours to minimize time spent in the building. At least 30 minutes between shifts is desirable, so the room is unoccupied and air exchange occurs. A “get-in-get-data-get-out” culture is established with all analysis done at

¹ <https://oregonstate.app.box.com/s/raoi7dap1gm2vmjeinpldiv5bnrchre>

² <https://oregonstate.app.box.com/s/c7qipf haz2arovrd3440ief55h64mc81>

³ <https://covid.oregonstate.edu/keep-researching>.

⁴ https://covid.oregonstate.edu/sites/covid.oregonstate.edu/files/osu_research_resumption_plan_form_05.26.2020_final.pdf

⁵ <https://ehs.oregonstate.edu/coronavirus>

⁶ <https://oregonstate.bridgeapp.com/learner/programs/94>

home.

- PIs and workers communicate to ensure that someone knows they have started and completed a shift (e.g. a Slack channel).
- Currently, no summer classes are scheduled in Weniger Hall, so there should be no student traffic associated with instructional activity.

Signup sheets to plan and record shifts, instrument use, and person-to-person contact: Each group must have one or more Google calendars to plan work for the upcoming week. This planning allows the building occupancy to be kept low. The calendar(s) must be modified to reflect actual room occupancy if different from that planned. This final calendar will be made available to county authorities to if someone tests positive for COVID-19 or is presumed to have COVID-19. Calendars must be able to answer the question, “Who was in what room at what time?”

Process: Each group must have an online signup sheet/calendar. Lab workers will sign up for shifts, providing a BRIEF work plan for the shift. Lab workers should budget time for cleaning and leave if they finish earlier than planned.

- The calendar must be modified to reflect actual room occupancy if different from that which was planned. (Labs may also have additional logging protocols.)
- PIs will summarize occupancy on a weekly basis in an Excel file stored in Box, and will provide the calendar promptly if requested by the authorities.
- Each lab will have written procedures for safely shutting down equipment in the shortest possible time in the event that an outbreak occurs. All lab members should be familiar with these procedures.

Instrumentation in user facilities: User facilities commonly accessed by Physics researchers include staffed (e.g. MASC cleanroom in Owen Hall) and unstaffed facilities (e.g. McIntyre Spectroscopy Lab, Graham spectrometer, Rorrer Raman Microscopy in Gleeson Hall). To use unstaffed facilities, users must contact the PI most closely associated with the facility. For the staffed facilities, the facility director will issue guidelines. *Lab workers will strictly adhere to all guidelines* for these facilities.

Taking breaks: Taking breaks is an important part of safe lab work. Taking breaks outside is encouraged. If they maintain safe distances, lab workers can use their shared office spaces to rest, drink water and consume food prepared at home, although it is strongly recommended to avoid eating at work.

- **Bring water from home; do not use drinking fountains.**
- Strict measures for sanitizing after food consumption should be followed.
- The fridge in the grad break room is off limits except for medicines.
- Gathering in former communal spaces is discouraged, as is loitering.

Visits for instrument setup, repair and maintenance: PIs request approval for the visit from the Department head, advised by R2R. All OSU policies and the instrument company guidelines must be followed. These visits should be noted on the weekly signup sheet and are counted in total building occupancy. The maintenance engineers should sign the personal health declaration.

Entrance/exit designations: All entrances/exits in Weniger are locked. Building keys will allow entrance and crash bars function for exit. Ensure that doors latch upon exiting.

- The southwest and northeast doors to Weniger Hall are designated IN. The northwest and southeast doors are designated OUT. *
- We recommend streamlined foot traffic. The southwest and northeast stairwells should be designated as UP stairwells and the northwest and southeast stairwells be designated as DOWN

stairwells.

*These building policies are being implemented as of 7/14/20. If your key does not work in one of the entrance doors, use an exit door until the situation is resolved.

Protocol and physical controls for common use spaces: To minimize touch points, some interior doors may be propped open Monday through Friday 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM. It is the responsibility of whoever opened the door to close the door when they leave. All labs should have a spray bottle of hand and surface sanitizer inside all lab doors that cannot be propped open. • Bathroom use should be one person at a time for bathrooms with multiple stalls. If the door is not open, use a “wait-until-clear” protocol, by asking loudly at the entrance if someone is present in a room or bathroom.

- Use easily removable & reusable gloves or some other device (plastic tubing) to open doors if you move frequently between rooms. Clean and reuse gloves where possible.
- Elevator occupancy should never exceed one. Elevators should be reserved for transporting large or wheeled items, and for people with conditions that make using stairs difficult.
- Lab workers should have a rough idea of airflow patterns in their labs and where makeup air comes from.

Janitorial service and cleaning guidelines: The building manger will request thorough daily cleaning/disinfection nightly of common use areas including bathrooms, stairwell, elevators, hallways. Touchpoints like doorknobs should be cleaned twice per day.

- Every lab and used office space will have a supply of hand sanitizer and surface cleaner (Chemstores has free alcohol sanitizer). *Lab workers will thoroughly clean common use ‘hot spots’ before leaving at the end of their shift.* This especially includes keyboards, mice and computer desks of instruments, surfaces around instruments, desks or tables.
- Everyone will contribute to general building cleanliness and welfare by adhering to posted signs to clean doorknobs, maintain distance, wash hands *etc.*

General guidelines for PPE and social distancing: Lab workers should follow all the guidelines relevant for public places, also reviewed in the [EH&S training modules](#) and [OSU face covering policy](#) [7]. The lab is responsible for providing PPE.

- **Workers will wear masks or face coverings**, except for extended work alone in a room, and especially when communicating with others, in hallways, *etc.* The Physics Office supplies one mask per person. Chemstores sells additional masks for labs and individuals who don’t have them. Lab workers should launder cloth coverings frequently or dispose of single-purpose masks.
- As always, lab workers will continue to wear labcoats and gloves for biological and chemical safety and to protect sensitive equipment if applicable, and should wear gloves when using shared equipment.
- Each lab group organizes shifts to maximize distance and time between lab workers.

Guidelines for working with people. PIs work with the Physics R2R working group to request departmental permission for workers to be on-site. All workers must be part of an approved resumption plan, and overall building occupancy must remain low. FRAs, post-docs and other independent workers have priority over workers who need supervision or oversight. Grad students usually have priority over undergraduates.

- **Training of new workers** is permitted only if the trainee and trainer can maintain 6 feet of distance. Wearing face coverings is mandatory when working in pairs.
- Lab workers who work in pairs shall maintain 6 feet of distance. Both parties must be comfortable

⁷ https://policy.oregonstate.edu/UPSM/04-041_COVID19_face_covering

with the arrangement, and be especially vigilant about monitoring personal health. Wearing face coverings is mandatory when working in pairs.

Reporting illness. •If employees think they have been exposed to COVID-19 and have symptoms, they should stay home, avoid close contact with others, and promptly contact their primary care provider for further assessment. Students who are symptomatic may receive in-house testing and should contact the Student Health Center.

- Employees should use standard procedures to notify their supervisor if they are ill and need to stay home. Consistent with general policy and practice, employees are not required to disclose—and supervisors should not inquire about—specific health conditions.
- Individuals who test positive, or are presumed to be positive, are required to self-isolate at home for 72 hours after all symptoms have been resolved, and for at least 10 days since symptoms first occurred. Individuals who are identified to have been in close contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case will be contacted by the local county health department and asked to self-quarantine for 14 days following the last contact with an infected person.
- Employees should not work while ill. A supervisor may tell an employee to leave their work location if the employee reports to work showing symptoms of illness. Employees are asked to cooperate with supervisors who are taking on this additional responsibility with the goal of supporting community well-being.
- If an individual tests positive for COVID-19, county health officials will contact those affected to initiate a contact tracing investigation of close contacts.

If someone tests positive: Any university community member who is made aware of a positive test should contact the relevant point of contact

OSU-Corvallis campus – Student cases: Jenny Haubenreiser (406) 559-0766

OSU-Corvallis campus – Non-student cases: Jen Humphreys(541) 760-2142

If a lab worker is reported or presumed infected with COVID, the local health authorities will contact university or departmental authorities. They will request building occupancy logs, which we will supply immediately. The local health authorities will contact anyone thought to have been in contact with the affected person.

If an outbreak occurs: Everyone on a floor, or in the department may be asked to place work and instruments in safe mode and vacate the labs immediately. A time lapse of 72 hours (3 days) plus disinfection of affected spaces must occur before anyone can resume work.

Contact tracing & Apps: Workers are encouraged to maintain their own daily log of contacts including personal ones outside of the lab. Workers are encouraged to install a free smartphone app, *e.g.*, NOVID, which uses ultrasound to monitor the distances between users, reports positive cases to users, and sends automatic notices to users who were around the positive cases. NOVID claims to protect the privacy of users, and seems to be set up to do so.

Personal responsibility & Research resumption pledge: Ultimately, our community is only as safe as its individuals. Remaining productive and employed during this time is a privilege, and members of the Physics department shall not endanger this opportunity. Ultimately, lab work during the pandemic is opt-in only. Lab workers who are uncomfortable with social contact during this time should plan alternative arrangements with their supervisors. All lab workers, including PIs, will be asked to sign the pledge on the next page. PIs will maintain records.

Research resumption pledge

By signing my name below, I am committed to the following practices and priorities for research resumption at Oregon State University during the COVID-19 pandemic.

My top priorities are

- Doing my part to ensure my health and safety, and the health of my coworkers, and my community, and
- Advancing my research without jeopardizing the health and safety of my coworkers and community.

I will abide by the guidelines set forth by Governor Kate Brown and the governance of Oregon, during the current phase of reopening (<https://govstatus.egov.com/reopening-oregon>).

If I partake in an event or activity that goes against the current guidelines to avoid spread of COVID (for example large gatherings without social distancing and/or face coverings) or find myself in a situation where I do not feel safe against possible contamination, I will not come to campus for 14 days, while self-quarantining and monitoring my health.

Further, each day, by scheduling and being present on campus for work, I am declaring that ...

- I am not ill. I have not had a fever, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, cough, shortness of breath, or other respiratory problems, sore throat, new loss of sense of smell or taste, or unusual headache, within the past 10 days.
- I have not been in close contact with anyone who has a probable or confirmed case of COVID-19 or is awaiting results of a COVID-19 test, within the past 14 days.
- I have not cared for someone who has a probable or confirmed case of COVID-19 or is awaiting results of a COVID-19 test, within the past 14 days.
- I have not tested positive for COVID-19 within the past 10 days.
- If I have been diagnosed with COVID-19, I have been symptom-free without fever reducing medication for at least 72 hours and at least 10 days have passed since the onset of my illness.
- If I develop any of the above symptoms or receive a confirmation that I am COVID-19 positive after working in an OSU laboratory, I will promptly notify the appropriate OSU point of contact.

NAME:

OSU research role (postdoc, graduate student, faculty research assistant or associate, etc.):

DATE: