

Physics department guidelines and plans for reopening laboratory research

Overview: OSU’s resumption plan since the advent of vaccines for COVID-19 is contained in the “Pathway to Fall” website [1]. In essence, it requires compliance with all state laws, OHA guidelines [], CDC recommendations [], and in addition requires OSU students and employees to be vaccinated against COVID, requires masks indoors (with exceptions), and physical distancing where reasonably possible. The College of Science Covid Response site [2] has information specific to our College and to OSU-sponsored travel. EHS also has COVID information [3].

This document describes procedures in place in the Physics Department to comply with University and College mandates, 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. It is guided by the values and principles set forth by OSU at the start of the pandemic [4].

The overarching principle is that people need to feel safe at work. They should expect that others care about their well-being and clearly communicate wishes, fears and expectations. Get vaccinated, wear masks, stay distant, and keep the place clean. Be considerate of other people and listen to their concerns. The rest of this document really just expands on this paragraph.

Return to Research (R2R) working group: Physics has a working group including a student representative, to liaise with the college and to lead discussion within the department about resumption of on-site research and other activities, but excluding planning for students to return to on-site classes. Feedback is welcome and should be directed to Janet Tate or any member of the R2R working group (current members listed in header).

Resumption Plan: The occupancy log (see below) will function as the “research resumption” document, formerly required by OSU’s Research Office. All PIs (faculty or students designated as instructors for the summer) list the people (other faculty, staff, students) who are part of their group and which rooms in Weniger Hall these people use. Listing of names in this document implies that the PI and group have a written statement of how the group will communicate, manage and monitor safety compliance, and what means the group will use to record individual occupancy. Each week the PI summarizes occupancy in Weniger for each (named) group member for each day in that week. R2R publishes an anonymous total of daily occupancy and total hours.

Research and work-related activities may be performed in Weniger Hall: provided the building occupancy remains low and physical distancing can be maintained. We will monitor building occupancy and publish it weekly. We will use a combination of working from home, shift work in Weniger Hall to keep density low. We will identify extra office space to try to accommodate those who wish to work from Weniger Hall, including teaching (summer only, as circumstances will change when larger classes resume in Fall term). Groups should continue to allow work from home if that is productive. Communication among group members is important to ensure that everyone feels safe and that everyone has the maximum opportunity to work in Weniger Hall if they wish. Meetings - research groups, committees, defenses and orals, one-on-one can remain virtual or can be conducted in-person subject to the masking rules.

¹ <https://covid.oregonstate.edu/safety-and-success-planning>

² <https://internal.science.oregonstate.edu/research-travel-resumption>

³ <https://ehs.oregonstate.edu/coronavirus>

⁴ https://research.oregonstate.edu/sites/research.oregonstate.edu/files/osu_research_values_05012020.pdf

Required training & adherence:

- We will follow the guidelines established by the CDC and summarized by OSU EH&S [5].
- OSU students and employees are to be vaccinated against COVID, starting in Fall term. We strongly suggest vaccination before working in Weniger, especially since OSU rules allow maskless working in designated workplaces if all designated workers are vaccinated (see below).
- Face coverings are to be worn in all places where an encounter with a second person is possible, unless OSU rules explicitly state otherwise.

Building occupancy: Since limited resumption on 6/18/20, Physics contributed about 10-15 people per day and about 40-60 people-hours per weekday (less on weekends) to the Weniger Hall building occupancy. This low density appears to ensure that people seldom come into contact.

- Weniger Hall will remain locked during the summer.
- People allowed to use the building must have authorized keys. Student researchers/workers receive authorization from the PI and then contact the Physics Office to get keys.
- Log your hours in Weniger Hall daily according to the protocol established by your group. This is very important because we must know how many people are in the building to help you assess risk. Each Monday, in response to a prompt from the R2R working group, the PI updates the list of workers and summarizes the occupancy for the previous week in the occupancy log stored in *Box/Faculty Collaboration//COVID-19/PhysicsWenigerPersonnel-AccessOccupancyList.xlsx*
- In Summer 2021, **no** Physics classes will meet in Weniger Hall. Some biology lab classes will meet in Weniger Hall, so there is some student traffic associated with that instructional activity in the north end of the building.

Signup sheets to plan and record occupancy: Each group must establish some means to record the occupancy of its rooms. The goal of the occupancy log is to establish how many people and how many hours were logged in Weniger Hall so that all workers have this information (it will be published in anonymous form on the web – a graph of total number of people and total number of hours). One way is a joint Google calendar to plan work for the upcoming week. This planning allows the building & room occupancy to be kept low. The calendar(s) should then be modified to reflect actual room occupancy if different from that planned. Such planning is good practice even under non-pandemic conditions. This final calendar could also be useful as a contact tracing tool if there is a COVID outbreak.

General guidelines for PPE, social distancing and working with people: Lab workers should follow all the guidelines relevant for public places. The lab is responsible for providing PPE.

- Wash hands frequently and keep workspaces clean
- **Workers will wear masks or face coverings** [6], especially when communicating with others, in common spaces. The Physics Office has a small supply for people who have misplaced their masks or to supply a visitor Exceptions are outlined in OSU policy [7].
 - Research group members can show PIs proof of vaccination. This is not a requirement, and the proof should not be recorded.
 - If they do provide proof, such as their vaccination card, then PIs (as their supervisor) can permit them to work without masks while in labs or offices used only by that group.
 - Distancing wherever possible still applies.
 - Masking when in proximity to others still applies.

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

⁶ https://policy.oregonstate.edu/UPSM/04-041_COVID19_face_covering

⁷ <https://oregonstate.app.box.com/s/ubzeolltjerpl6pbipami0cns3um6fwi>

- As always, lab workers will wear labcoats and gloves for biological and chemical safety and to protect sensitive equipment if applicable, and should wear gloves when using shared equipment.
- Training of new workers is permitted if the trainee and trainer wear masks when they cannot maintain 6 feet of distance. Please see the Training Best Practices document [8].
- 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.
- Taking breaks is part of safe lab work. Taking breaks outside is encouraged, especially to eat and drink. 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 recommended to avoid eating at work.
- Bring water from home; do not use drinking fountains.
- Sanitize after food consumption.
- 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: Such visits are allowed, subject to maintaining masking and physical distancing requirements. These visits should be noted on the group calendar and reported in the weekly occupancy log. The maintenance people should follow masking and distancing protocol and affirm they are healthy.

Entrance/exit designations & foot traffic: All entrances/exits to Weniger Hall are locked. Building keys allow entrance; crash bars function for exit. Ensure doors latch upon exiting.

- The southwest and northeast doors to Weniger Hall are designated IN. The northwest and southeast doors are designated OUT. If building occupancy becomes significant, people following these directions have right of way.
- To streamline foot traffic, keep right in hallways.

Protocol and physical controls for common use spaces:

- High-touch surfaces like doorknobs continue to be cleaned frequently by janitorial staff.
- Keep your own spaces clean by wiping down surfaces and equipment regularly and often.
- Wash hands frequently. All labs should have a spray bottle of hand and surface sanitizer.
- Bathroom use should comply with masking and distancing rules. Use a “wait-until-clear” protocol, by asking loudly at the entrance if someone is present in a room or bathroom.
- Elevator occupancy should never exceed two. Elevators should be mainly used for transporting large or wheeled items, and for people with conditions that make using stairs difficult.
- Have a rough idea of airflow patterns in your labs and where makeup air comes from and factor time in the building and time in a multiply occupied room into the decision-making process.

Reporting illness.

- If you think you have been exposed to COVID-19 and have symptoms, stay home, avoid close contact with others, & promptly contact your primary care provider for further assessment. Students who are symptomatic may receive in-house testing and should contact the Student Health Center.
- Use standard procedures to notify their supervisor if they are ill and need to stay home. Consistent with general policy and practice, you 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

⁸http://physics.oregonstate.edu/sites/physics.oregonstate.edu/files/Lab%20training%20best%20practices%20covid_20200801.pdf

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 you to leave the work location if you report to work showing symptoms of illness. You are asked to cooperate with supervisors who are taking on this additional responsibility to support community well-being.
- If you test positive for COVID-19, county health officials will contact you 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 a COVID 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.

Personal responsibility & Research resumption pledge: Ultimately, our community is only as safe as its individuals. Remaining productive and employed during this time requires cooperation and communication and a shared responsibility and commitment to discuss safety and remain informed about the rapidly-changing COVID situation.

- 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, are to sign the pledge on the next page. PIs file the pledges on Box.

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 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: