

Field Safety Guidelines and Checklist
Department of Oceanography, Dalhousie University

March 04, 2025

Conducting research in the field is an important part of oceanography and a rewarding experience of professional growth for students. The Department has a long history of oceanographic fieldwork and places great value on safety. We encourage supervisors, students, and other participants to work together in preparation for all aspects of field safety.

In this spirit, we ask all participant-supervisor pairs to complete the attached checklist **for each field trip or expedition** where anyone supervised by a member of the Department participates in field work. Field work is defined here as research activities in (a) the coastal or open ocean, lakes, wetlands, etc.; and (b) an extended stay at a research institution other than Dalhousie.

Prior to departure, supervisors must forward the following information to the departmental administrator: name of the student participant, banner #, destination, departure and return date. This information will be forwarded to Dalhousie's insurance department (Insurance@dal.ca).

Checklist:

1. Who is the person responsible for the overall field project, and what is their working relationship with the participant (e.g., supervisor, senior collaborating scientist, etc.)? What are the responsibilities of the person(s) in charge to the participant?

2. If a safety issue arises for a participant, how should the participant bring this to the attention of the people in charge? *Note:* There may be multiple responsible people, for instance the supervisor may be responsible but not participating in the field work; additional responsible people could be e.g., chief scientist or captain on a research vessel.

3. What are the relevant emergency contacts (name and phone number) for this field work, and under what circumstances should they be called?

4. What are the known hazards, beyond those encountered in everyday life, that might be present during this field work? Would you classify these as low, medium or high risk? How are these hazards being mitigated, for example through training or supply of personal protective equipment? Are any of these hazards more likely to impact this specific participant, and if so, are additional mitigation measures in place? Adjust the following table to a given situation and add extra rows and columns as needed.

Hazard	Risk	Mitigation	Participant-specific mitigation needed?
<i>example severe weather</i>	<i>sea sickness</i>	<i>medication</i>	<i>get prescription for stronger medication</i>

5. It may be important that you and your supervisor familiarize yourself with the history of research in the study region and the way in which you might be received by locals as an external researcher as a result of that history. This implies an examination of one’s positionality as a researcher vis a vis the research being undertaken. Find out who the local points of contact representing local leadership are in the region (e.g., community leaders, Indigenous Elders, community organizations). If possible and appropriate, get consent for the research to be carried out. These aspects are imperative when doing **research on Indigenous lands**.

6. All participants are encouraged to remember that the expectations for working relationships between students and supervisors and other people in positions of power extend to the field.

7. **We expect that you are always in a state where you can be responsible for your safety and your team-mate's safety.** Being intoxicated (drugs, alcohol) or overtired (lack of rest) poses significant safety risks.

8. In addition, model your behavior according to the following principles:

***Professionalism** - conducting ourselves in a confident, respectful, self-disciplined manner*
***Civility** - being able to co-exist with others with whom we may not always agree*
***Respect** - treating others how they wish to be treated by respecting their lived experiences, identities and backgrounds*
***Inclusion** - ensuring that your teammates feel included in your team regardless of their gender, race, ethnicity, (dis)ability, gender identity or expression, or religious background*

adapted from: NOAA Shipboard Civility-Fostering a Respectful Work Environment
<https://www.unols.org/shipboard-civility>

9. All participants are encouraged to familiarize themselves with 'code of conduct' documents relevant to their field work prior to leaving. Most organizations and vessels have these types of documents and make them readily available.
10. Dalhousie also has resources and policies outlining expectations for behavior and defining what harassment is and what it is not. In short, **harassment** is abusive, unfair, or demeaning treatment of a person that is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome and unwanted. Examples include name calling, insults, microaggressions, unwanted compliments, inappropriate jokes, threats, shouting, derogatory remarks, misgendering, gossiping, and spreading malicious rumours.

Appropriate direction, delegation, and performance management are not harassment.

Sexual harassment is any sexually oriented behavior of a deliberate or negligent nature which adversely affects the working environment. It can be intentional or unintentional. Examples include (a) sexual solicitation or advance of a repeated, persistent or abusive nature made by a person who knows or ought reasonably to know that such solicitation or advance is unwanted and (b) the promise of reward for complying with a sexually oriented suggestion.

For more information, refer to:

<https://www.dal.ca/about/mission-vision-values/equity-diversity-inclusion-and-accessibility/about-office-equity-inclusion/human-rights-and-equity-services/personal-harassment.html>

<https://www.dal.ca/about/mission-vision-values/equity-diversity-inclusion-and-accessibility/about-office-equity-inclusion/human-rights-and-equity-services/sexualized-violence/sexual-harassment.html> - *Sexual harassment is prohibited the Sexualized Violence Policy.*

11. If a participant does experience harassment or sexualized violence during field work, they are encouraged to report the incident to the responsible people (see item 1 above). Note that the documents mentioned above (items 9 and 10) can be helpful as they spell out the process for reporting an incident, either informally or formally. The difference between the informal and the formal process is typically the degree of confidentiality, which is higher in the informal process.
12. Where external communications are available, Dalhousie's Sexualized Violence Advisor is trained to help individuals who have experienced sexualized violence and can be a resource for the participant. The Sexualized Violence Advisor offers confidential support and assistance to any member of the Dalhousie Community. Participants can reach out to the Advisor before, during or after fieldwork to learn more about reporting options, receive work and academic accommodations, and referrals to various campus and community resources. Participants can contact HRES@dal.ca or call 902-494-6672 for more information or to book an appointment.