COVID-19 PREVENTION GUIDELINES FOR SMALL BOAT OPERATIONS

These COVID-19 Prevention Guidelines for Small Boat Operations are intended to supplement the University of Washington COVID-19 Prevention Plan for the Workplace. The University Plan includes a template for the site-specific COVID-19 Prevention Plan that is required for the workplace. These guidelines for boat operations should be followed and included as a part of the site-specific plan.

The following guidelines were developed by the Environmental Health & Safety (EH&S) department to help ensure the health and safety of personnel operating small boats by reducing the potential for COVID-19 transmission. All employees and students engaged in small boat operations are expected to adhere to the most current and up-to-date University of Washington (UW), local, state, and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines prior to commencing field operations.

ESSENTIAL OPERATIONS APPROVAL

Prior to engaging in small boat operations, all operations and operators must be approved by their unit leader or designee in accordance with the current UW Office of Research’s Guidelines for Mitigating Impacts to Research Activities Due to COVID-19 and Guidance for Returning to In-Person Research.

PROCEDURES FOR SICK PERSONNEL, SYMPTOM MONITORING, REPORTING AND RESPONSE

The following requirements are subject to change, and the most up-to-date information can be found on the UW Human Resources COVID-19 employee symptom attestation webpage.

Operators, crew, and passengers must stay home if they are sick or have any symptoms of illness, even mild symptoms. If an individual becomes sick while on site, they must notify their supervisor and go home. Individuals experiencing symptoms of illness should follow the steps in the FAQ, “What do I do if I feel sick?” on the University’s Novel coronavirus & COVID-19 page.

The University requires a daily COVID-19 symptom attestation for all personnel working on site at a University location. Refer to the Guidance for Symptom Monitoring for COVID-19 to implement a symptom attestation process for personnel who do not have access to Workday.
University units and personnel are required to report to a University Employee Health Center suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19, and individuals who had close contact with a person who has COVID-19.

COMMUNICATION AND TRAINING

All University units are required to communicate to personnel about ways to prevent the spread of COVID-19, including reviewing their unit and worksite-specific procedures for COVID-19 prevention. The UW Stay Healthy, Huskies toolkit has posters and graphics in various formats for you to post and communicate in your work area.

All personnel must be trained on COVID-19 prevention practices prior to engaging in boating activities, and training must be documented. Training information must include maintaining physical and social distancing of at least 6 feet, practicing good hygiene (e.g., washing hands frequently, not touching other people, and staying home if you are sick or symptomatic), cleaning and disinfecting surfaces, wearing required face coverings, and using required personal protective equipment (PPE). The University's general COVID-19 Safety Training is required for all University personnel before or upon returning to work on site at a University location.

PHYSICAL DISTANCING

The number of vessel crew personnel should be reduced to the minimum necessary to accomplish the work being done. Vessel operations that can be safely conducted by a single qualified operator shall be performed alone and are subject to Departmental Boat Owner approval. Individual participants must transit to and from operational sites in separate vehicles; no carpooling is allowed. All individuals must keep a physical distance of at least 6 feet at all times. Any vessel used in a team operation needs to be large enough to allow for a minimum of 6 feet of distance between individuals. For windy and moist environments, such as on a boat or dockside, downwind positions may require greater distancing. Where physical conditions or weather will not allow for this separation, individuals will be required to wear additional personal protective equipment (PPE).

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

Face coverings are required to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 and exposure when more than one person is aboard the vessel. If a 6-foot physical distance cannot be maintained, individuals are required to wear PPE, based on the work being performed. Refer to the Guidance on face covering use for preventing the spread of COVID-19 for more information. Special attention should be paid to the use of cloth face coverings, which become ineffective when wet. The environmental conditions aboard a small boat often lead to water splashing on operators. As such, the use of face shields may be required in addition to the cloth face covering. Refer to EH&S's Guidelines for Personal Protective
Equipment and Workplace COVID-19 Risk Level and Selection of PPE when choosing the appropriate level of protection.

HYGIENE

Personnel must have access to soap and running water to wash their hands after touching any shared surface or tool, before and after eating, after using the restroom, and before touching their face. Frequent hand washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds reduces the risk of spreading COVID-19. If the vessel is equipped with a sink, handwashing should be done on a regular basis. For vessels that do not have a sink, secondary hand sanitizing stations may be set up. Use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol content. Hand sanitizer needs to be stored in a temperature-controlled environment, out of direct sunlight and away from heat.

Additional good hygiene practices include, but are not limited to; avoiding touching your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands; avoiding contact with people who are sick; covering your mouth and nose with your elbow or a tissue when coughing or sneezing, and immediately disposing of the used tissue.

DECONTAMINATION AND SANITIZING

Handheld equipment should be sanitized with an approved sanitizing agent. All high-touch surfaces in vehicles, in vessels, and on shared equipment, such as door handles, vessel logs, keys, float plan cabinets, hose ribs, and nozzles, are required to be decontaminated before and after each use. Every person is responsible for disinfecting their own work gear with an approved sanitizing agent. This includes Personal Flotation Devices and any safety gear handled.

Follow the instructions in the Enhanced Cleaning and Disinfection Protocols. Hard, non-porous surfaces can be disinfected using an EPA-registered disinfectant approved for use against SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. Flammable or alcohol-based disinfectants should be avoided, as temperature regulation may not be possible during operations.

FIELD PROCEDURES

Pre- and post-operation briefings should be conducted off the vessel. Briefings should be concise, with individuals maintaining at least a physical distance of 6 feet between each person. Launching and landing of vessels should be done individually or while maintaining a minimum of 6 feet of physical distance. When possible, only the vessel operator should handle the vessel controls, electronics, switches and console surfaces. Sanitizing should be done to these areas prior to another individual taking over. In order to minimize touching of these surfaces, and to maintain 6 feet of physical distance, no “operators in training” shall be allowed to handle the vessel controls while operations are underway.
Please contact EH&S at ehsdept@uw.edu or call 206.543.7262 with questions or for assistance.

Concerns about COVID-19 safety can be reported anonymously to EH&S via an online form.

*This document will be updated as regulations and public health guidance change.*