

Off-Campus Activity Risk Assessment

This document is a resource for university entities performing off-campus activities to assess and mitigate risk. Individuals and groups who lead off-campus activities or their designee (e.g., a PI directing field research activities as part of a research project) will customize the various sections of this risk assessment and complete the off-campus emergency action plan with the appropriate information pertaining to their off-campus activities. This risk assessment and the off-campus emergency action plan should also include any additional information on known hazards not listed. Note: impacts of and mitigation efforts for risks associated with COVID-19 transmission to the subject off-campus activities will be appended to the emergency action plan.

APPROVALS

Obtain approval of the activity itinerary by the department approving authority.

Allow adequate lead time for review and approvals. For some activities, this will include time for preparation and review of contract and insurance requirements.

Contact [ISU Procurement Services](#) or the [ISU Office of University Counsel](#) for contract review. Contact the [Office of Risk Management \(ORM\)](#) for insurance language reviews and certificates of insurance.

Familiarize yourself with the [ISU Travel](#) policies.

Determine the need for background checks and obtain if required. This includes activities with individuals under the age of eighteen participating. See the ORM [Youth Activities](#) policy for more information.

Determine duties of any authorized volunteers. Please reference the ORM [Volunteers](#) policy for additional information.

ORIENTATION

Prepare orientation materials for off-campus activity leaders and participants, to include information addressing various risk exposures.

Consider experience and age of participants (include parents when minor children will be participating.) Provide an overview, clear description, and special requirements of the off-campus activity for the participant orientation. For example:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certifications, approvals, permissions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • equipment dictated by weather, wild animals, water, or other site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fitness including varying levels for terrain
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • locations to be visited 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • money matters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • safety clothing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • safety training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • special skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • terrain-specific safety
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • transportation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • travel, food and lodging arrangements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • university insurance information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • group communication procedures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • emergency sheltering procedures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • emergency evacuation procedures

Consider cultural and legal differences that may exist at the activity location; provide necessary cross-cultural orientation, training, and resources for participants and group leaders.

Consider the interaction of persons, social, and instructional activities in a field trip situation. Be aware of how the situation, setting, and personal conduct may be perceived by participants and those with whom event participants may interact.

Review with participants and leaders pertinent university and campus policies, including those pertaining to Alcohol, Drugs and Other Intoxicants and Sexual Misconduct, Sexual Harassment, and Sexual Assault.

WAIVERS

In addition to the orientation, as applicable, obtain completed and signed [waivers/releases](#), [participation agreements](#), or other forms required by ORM and/or the [Office of Research Ethics \(ORE\)](#) to make sure all participants are fully informed of activities, personal risks, and potential hazards.

Select any of the appropriate ORM and ORE template forms for participants, volunteers and family members.

Revise any template form used to include a description of the specific risks of the activity.

Note: The university does not provide personal property, medical, or auto insurance for non-employee participants.

Requirements for any individuals involved with the off-campus activity who are deemed employees of ISU will differ from those of non-employee participants. ORM, ORE, and EH&S can provide specific guidance whether any agreements may be needed for non-employee involvement.

TRANSPORTATION

Determine transportation needs, including reservation of vehicles and an adequate number of qualified and trained drivers. The travel route should be planned and maps with directions included with the off-campus emergency action plan. Identify meeting locations in case participants get separated or an emergency or communication failure occurs.

Motor Vehicles

Motor vehicles are one of the most prevalent safety issues for travelers. Good practices and things to consider include:

- Follow all rules and criteria in the applicable [Fleet Safety and Vehicle Use/Rental](#) and/or [ISU Travel – Student Organization Policy](#).
- Drivers of large passenger vans or vehicles towing trailers must be at least 20 years old and have successfully completed Transportation Services [Van and Trailer Training](#). Limit distractions to the driver, particularly in multi-passenger vehicles such as large vans.
- Consider traffic congestion in larger cities and allow plenty of time to accommodate traffic without speeding.
- Among other important requirements to consider when towing a trailer, make sure to use the appropriate vehicle. Inspect the trailer at regular intervals during transit to verify that it is road worthy.

Personal Vehicles: Advise owners and drivers of personal vehicles that the university does not provide insurance coverage for privately owned vehicles, even while vehicles are being driven on university business.

Rental Vehicles: Employees using rental vehicles should consult the [Procurement Services](#) website for policies and procedures to rent a vehicle, to determine insurance coverages, and to report an accident. Failure to follow the correct procedure may result in personal responsibility for rental vehicle damages.

ISU Transportation Services: If an ISU-provided vehicle will be used, contact [Transportation Services](#) for guidance on selection of the appropriate type of vehicle for the planned activity.

FIRST AID KIT

A first aid kit outfitted in accordance with [university guidance](#) should be located where participants have easy access. If participants will be separated into more than one group and not working near to each other, multiple first aid kits shall be maintained, and one assigned to each group. The location of the first aid kits will be communicated to the participants. Contents should be inspected for completeness prior to departure and be stored in a manner where inclement weather cannot damage the contents.

EH&S recommends that at least one person have current First Aid, CPR, & AED training. EH&S has an AED available for loan on a first-come, first-serve basis. If you are interested in borrowing the AED during your off-campus activity, email ehsinfo@iastate.edu. During planning of the off-campus activity, identify and document in the plan the locations of local medical facilities in case care beyond first aid is needed.

ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

Environmental hazards exist both traveling to the destination and while at the destination. Good practices and things to consider include:

- Plan according to the weather during travel and while at the destination.
- Prepare clothing and foot protection accordingly.
- Rough terrain may be present at the project site and may be encountered during any trip.
- In case of an incident, individual team members should not separate from the main team.

Insects, Snakes, Plants, and Animals

Many parts of the country have species that are not found in Iowa. Good practices and things to consider include:

- Research any known dangerous animals and insects found in the destination(s). Ensure that the team is aware of the potential hazards associated with interactions with them.
- Identify and avoid any common snake, insect, and animal risks, such as rattlesnakes or spiders. Know the symptoms and first aid procedures for stings, bites, etc. that may occur.
- Identify any potential poisonous plants like poison ivy, poison oak, or sumac that may be encountered during off-campus activities and how to prevent and mitigate exposures to them.

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

Standard operating procedures (SOPs) should be written for all off-campus activities involving hazardous chemicals, machinery, or specialized procedures or processes during the activities. A SOP provides a standardized reference during instruction, training, and competence verification. SOPs must be readily available in printed or electronic form where the activity is taking place. For SOP assistance, see the [ISU EH&S SOP Development webpage](#).