

# Guidelines for Operating a Safe Laboratory Environment in the UNC Eshelman School of Pharmacy

(adapted from the School of Medicine guidelines)

## GOAL: Lab Occupancy ≤50%

**Each PI is required to prepare a plan for their lab and send it to their Chair/Center Director with a copy to the Associate Dean for Research for review and approval prior to lab ramp-up.**

Elements of that Plan prepared by each PI should at least include:

1. Number of personnel in assigned lab space in any shift versus total number of research personnel.
2. Any shift schedules planned for the lab and shift assignments by full name.
3. Plans to ramp-up slowly to 50% if not starting at 50% initially.
4. Drawing of lab space with general personnel locations, including lab benches and desks.

**In addition to the guidelines provided by the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research (<https://research.unc.edu/covid-19/resuming/all/>), the following guidelines are provided to laboratory PIs, who are responsible for ensuring the safety of their staff and trainees. Each PI must use their best judgement, and consult with the Division Chair or Center Director if they have specific questions or concerns.**

### General Lab Guidelines

- **W**ear a mask, **W**ash your hands, **W**ipe what you touch, **W**ellness check before coming to work.
- **Researchers should only be doing work in the lab that cannot be performed remotely.**
- Lab meetings, smaller research/writing working group meetings, and journal clubs should continue to occur via Zoom.
- Communication in lab should occur via Zoom, WhatsApp, text, email, Microsoft TEAMS or other non-personal contact methods.
- If you are unable to go to work in the lab because of a medical reason, you will need to seek accommodations through Human Resources.
- Personnel accessing the lab on campus will be provided gloves, masks (1-2 per week), hand sanitizer, and disinfectant by UNC, as outlined in separate guidelines.

### Wellness Check and Symptoms

Each employee must do an at-home wellness check before coming into work. As outlined by the CDC (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>), employees must **NOT COME TO WORK (or leave work immediately)** if they have (or develop) any of the following symptoms:

1. Temperature ≥ 100°F
2. Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
3. Headache
4. Sore throat
5. Chills, or repeated shaking with chills
6. Cough, congestion, or runny nose
7. Nausea, vomiting or new gastrointestinal symptoms
8. New loss of taste or smell
9. Generalized muscle pain/aches

**Personnel exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms** should contact their health care provider, and act upon their instructions. The lab supervisor should be notified. UNC employees may contact the University Employee Occupational Health Clinic (919-966-9119), and UNC students and postdoctoral fellows may contact UNC Campus Health (919-966-2281). **Any individual who has tested positive for COVID-19, who has been referred for testing, or who is awaiting test results, may not come to work on campus for any reason until approved to do so** by Employee Occupational Health or Campus Health.

### **Create a work schedule for your lab and adhere to it.**

- **Researchers should only be doing work in the lab that cannot be performed remotely.**
- **PIs should carefully prioritize research activities that are most important to resume during the ramp-up period, and carefully consider which personnel will complete these activities in the lab.** While some personnel will be eager to resume work in the lab, others may be reluctant. PIs should assure that research personnel being assigned responsibility for research activities during the ramp-up period are willing to follow the guidelines. If research personnel cannot come into the lab to perform required work, those personnel should work with HR to seek the appropriate accommodations.
- **The work schedule must minimize the number of people in each laboratory room at any one time.** Occupancy should be  $\leq 50\%$  of normal, and no more than 1 person/200 sq ft. (preferably 250 or 300 sq ft!).
  - The calendar function in Microsoft Teams or another online tool should be used to help coordinate everyone's schedule and indicate who is present in lab space at any given time.
  - In certain labs, scheduling with neighboring labs needs to be coordinated.
- **Consider working in 2 or 3 shifts to keep lab occupancy to a minimum.** Other Schools have recommended 6am-2pm and 2pm-10pm shifts for lab operations to help minimize density.
- **As appropriate, distribute a list of duties to be performed by personnel, with location and designated time of day for indicated duties.**
- **Continue to conduct lab meetings remotely and use virtual meetings for manuscript writing and working group discussions.** Researchers should only be doing work in the lab that cannot be performed remotely.
- **Encourage personnel to stagger break times to minimize contact between people.** Seating in workspaces must be at least 6 ft apart in all directions.
  - Whenever possible, eat before or after work, or eat outside to avoid eating in the lab/building. Shorter shifts (e.g., 6am-11am; 11am-4pm; 4pm-9pm) may facilitate maximizing work efficiency and minimizing down-time.
  - Break rooms, microwaves, and common eating areas should be avoided whenever possible.
  - Disinfect surfaces such as tables and chairs before and after use.
  - Cups, mugs, plates, and silverware must be washed with soap before and after use.
  - Wash your hands before and after using a break room.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cleaning-disinfection.html>

### **Create safe spaces to maintain at least 6 feet between researchers at all times.**

- **Post lab room and other room maps with maximum room/bay occupancy** to maintain social distancing (see examples below). Post single occupancy signs on smaller rooms, where appropriate.
- **Small, narrow laboratories/facilities (e.g., 100-200 sq ft) can only accommodate one person at a time.** If you cannot maintain at least 6 feet of social distance, revise the schedule and/or reconfigure the room.
- **If necessary, move equipment to create at least 6 feet between operators** and to reduce the number of narrow spaces in labs and hallways where researchers must pass each other.
- Consider marking the floors with tape to indicate distance from desks or benches.

### **Create a plan for safe practices in the lab.**

- **Wear your own mask at all times** per guidance from the Vice Chancellor for Research document. Face coverings must not interfere with PPE (e.g., eye shields) required for safety, and must be compatible with all safety requirements. Pay attention to guidance on how long each mask should last and how to properly store it between use.
  - Perform hand hygiene before and after using any mask or face covering.
  - Never touch the outside of the mask- always assume the outside-facing side is dirty.

- **If researchers need to work in close proximity for experiments (<6ft distance),** a face shield in addition to a mask and standard PPE should be worn.
- **Wash your hands with soap or use hand sanitizer upon entering and before leaving the lab and touching shared accessory devices** like phones (use speaker phone if possible), computer keyboards etc.
- **Thoroughly wash your hands or use hand sanitizer frequently.** Wash hands often with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- **Whenever possible, each researcher should have their own set of frequently used tools** (please label with your name or initials) such as pipets, reagent bottles, laboratory notebooks, and writing instruments.
- **Gloves and disposable towels should be used when handling common reagent bottles, laboratory equipment, common computers, and cabinet handles.**
- **Door handles should be wiped or sprayed with 70% ethanol** (or other EPA approved disinfectant) frequently. Ideally, post a log sheet for the lab to document daily disinfection.
- **Increase the frequency of cleaning and disinfecting, focusing on high-touch surfaces.**
- **Clean and disinfect affected surfaces as soon as possible after a known exposure to a person with respiratory symptoms (such as coughing/sneezing).**

### **Create a plan for shared equipment.**

- **All shared equipment must be disinfected *before* and *after* each use.**
- **Wear disposable gloves while cleaning and disinfecting.** Discard gloves after each use. Clean hands immediately after gloves are removed.
- **Disinfect equipment that normally makes direct physical contact with human skin,** which includes eyepieces for microscopes, keyboards, touch pads, freezer door handles, etc.
- **Use disposable tissues, paper towels, Kimwipes, etc. to touch surfaces that cannot be disinfected and when gloves are not available.**
- **Use disposable towels to turn off sink faucets and open doors after hand washing** to avoid re-contaminating hands.
- **Consult manufacturer recommendations on cleaning products appropriate for electronics.** If no guidance is available, consider the use of alcohol-based wipes or spray containing at least 70% alcohol. Use of alcohol-based products may reduce risk of damage to sensitive machine components. Whenever possible, consider using wipeable covers for electronics

### **Create a plan for interactions with others outside the lab.**

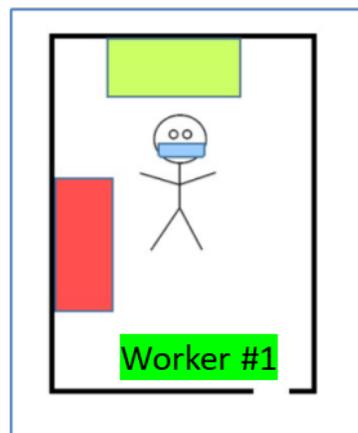
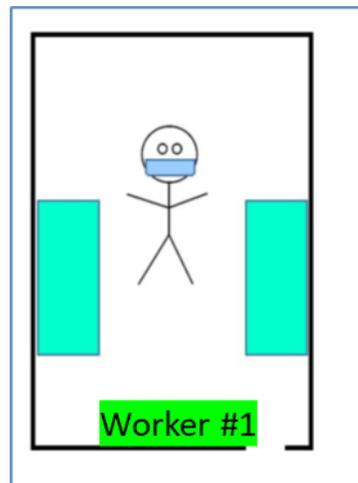
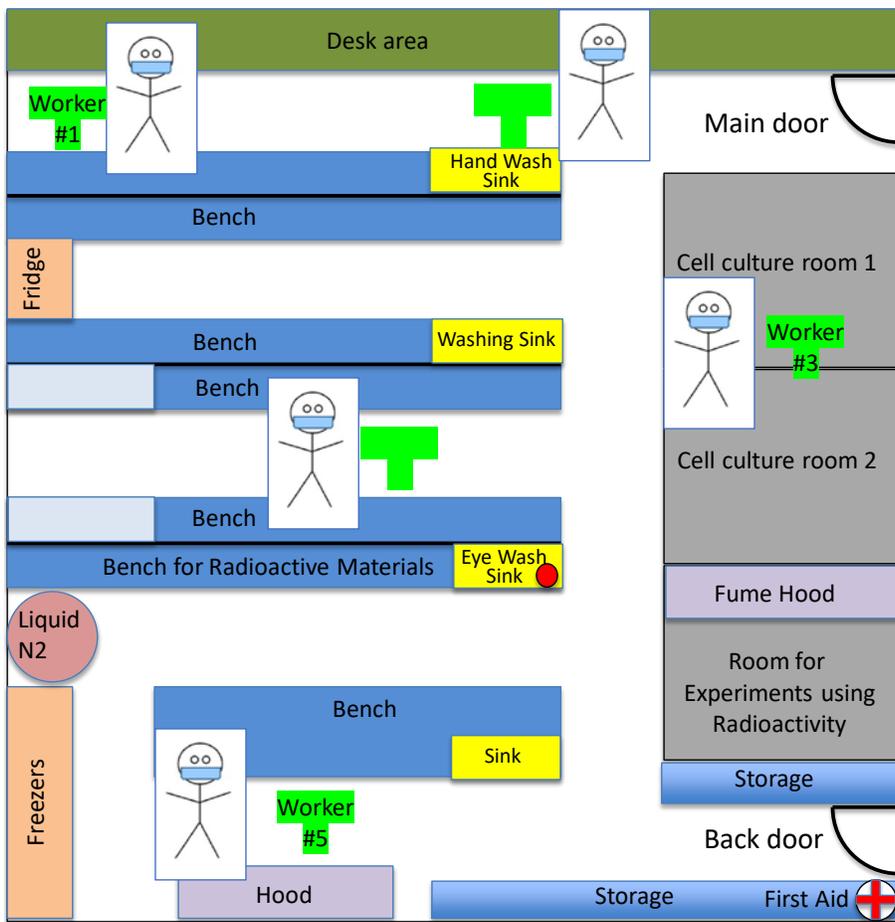
- **Do not congregate in entrances, hallways, stairwells, or elevator lobbies.**
- **Contact with other labs should preferably be through phone calls or email/text messaging** except in cases of extreme emergency.
- **Transfer of items should be arranged by leaving them in a designated area** rather than handing them over in person.
- **Use of shared facilities and other labs' equipment should be pre-arranged** in order to avoid accidental contact.

### **Plans for monitoring.**

- **Compliance with these guidelines is critical to keep everyone safe and back at work.** Each PI must discuss with all of their research personnel the importance of compliance.
- **Peer-to-peer monitoring is encouraged:** "if you see something, say something." To report violations of compliance rules: (1) politely ask the person to please comply, and (2) if the person refuses to comply, please report this to your PI designate, PI and/or anonymously through the Carolina Ethics Line at 866-294-8688.

- Each PI should consider designating at least one individual (e.g., senior lab member) who will oversee compliance issues/concerns and report problems to the PI, Chair/Center Director, and/or Associate Dean for Research.
- If you would like to suggest ideas for implementation or share best practices as we begin this phased re-opening of our research laboratories, or if you have questions or comments, please submit them here: ["Campus Reopening Anonymous Questions, Suggestions, and Reports of Non-Compliance" form.](#)

The following maps serve as a guideline only for spacing of lab personnel in laboratory and work rooms. Please draw your own maps and tailor them to your own lab spaces and lab rooms and distribute to your research personnel.



- Guidelines are:
  - Keep at least 6 feet distance between 2 people
  - Everyone wears a mask
- Work in shifts, if needed, so that not all lab personnel are in the lab at the same time (consider using an online calendar for scheduling work times).
- Each room should have no more than 1 person with a mask per every 200 sq ft, or 1 person per bay, depending on lab configuration and size of benches. Avoid working directly across from each other in bays.
- Room capacity: 1 person per 150-250 sq ft office, cold room, equipment room, tissue/cell culture room, or BSL2 room.
- Equipment in close proximity should be moved to allow more than 1 person at a time to use equipment.
- Clean all common areas, equipment, and surfaces after each use.