

Will Coronavirus Impact Your Research? Yes, Plan Now

March 9, 2020. The news is flooded with updates about the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, and we want to assure you we are continuing to monitor the situation. For the latest information and instructions visit UCF's website <https://ucf.edu/safety/coronavirus> dedicated to this issue. Our first priority is your safety and that of our campus community. We know you likely have concerns about the impact the outbreak may have on your research work.

Now is a good time to evaluate how your work in the lab or in the field may be impacted should conditions necessitate. Think weeks, not days. What research is essential and must be completed in the lab? Can your work be done remotely? How many people truly need access to the lab and how often? Are there special safety concerns? These are some of the questions you should be asking to prepare your mitigation plan.

Should face-to-face classes and events be canceled, access to campus and your labs may become limited, and you want to position yourself in the best way to weather disruptions with the least possible impact. The Office of Research is working hand-in-hand with university leadership to plan logistics as necessitated by the outbreak. We are also in communication with sponsor agencies to understand and communicate their responses.

Here is what you can count on from UCF. We will maintain power and telecommunications functions. UCF is closely working with the Florida Department of Health, the CDC, and other local and national agencies. We will communicate through the dedicated website <https://www.ucf.edu/safety/coronavirus/> and email.

What should you do now?

- If you have any changes for contacts in your labs, update your emergency information with EHS through the EHSA Login tab (<https://ehs.ucf.edu/>)
- Identify who is essential personnel in your lab.
- Figure out what work can be done remotely.
- Identify procedures and processes that require regular personnel attention.
- Assess and prioritize critical laboratory activities.
- Identify any research experiments that can be ramped down, curtailed, or delayed.
- Identify personnel able to safely perform essential activities.
- Ensure that you have access to contact information for your critical staff.

- Cross-train research staff to fill in for others who may be out sick or unable to come to work.
 - Ensure staff have the appropriate/required training.
 - Consider documenting critical step-by-step instructions.
- Coordinate with colleagues who have similar research activities to identify ways to ensure coverage of critical activities.
- Review contingency plans and emergency procedures with researchers and staff.
- Maintain a sufficient inventory of critical supplies that may be impacted by global shipping delays.
- Consider installing remote control monitoring devices for critical equipment (-80C freezers, liquid nitrogen storage dewars, incubators). Contact EHS if you need help with these devices.
- Identify work that can be done from home or remotely, such as data analysis.
- Test and update remote work technologies such as VPN and Zoom conferencing.
- Remind staff to stay home when they are not feeling well.
- Consider avoiding in-person meetings. Use remote options such as Zoom conferencing.

Keep in mind that if an outbreak is extensive across the nation, there will be many challenges that could impact your research work.

- People who work in your laboratory may be out sick or unable to come to work.
- Orders for critical supplies may be delayed.
- Processing of visas by the federal government may be delayed, resulting in delayed appointments.
- Core facilities and other fee-for-service resources may not be available.
- Repairs performed by facilities and other service providers may be delayed.
- Decontamination of your workspace may be necessary in the event of a local illness.
- Sponsors may delay awards notification and funding if they experience closures.

We are working with local and federal agencies to plan, and we will communicate with you through email and the website as we finalize protocols and receive instructions from federal agencies.

If you have questions related to lab safety please contact EHS at 407-823-6300 or ehs@ucf.edu. For sponsored research questions email Dorothy Yates at Dorothy.Yates@ucf.edu

The Coronavirus is serious, but this is not the time to panic. It is time to plan. We will get through this together.