

Earth and Mineral Sciences Town Hall

May 26, 2020

Ramping Up Research



Ramp Up Planning

- OSVPR Task Force addressed University-wide issues for ramping up research that ensures compliance with all COVID-19 restrictions/guidance and protects the health, safety and welfare of our research community
- Similar task forces are working on “Return to Work”, “Return to Campus”, and “Health Impacts”
- Ramp up Research Report has been shared with the other task forces for suggestions and revisions
- EMS Research Ramp Up Task Force has been creating a plan for all EMS facilities as we transition to a research footing



Stages of Research Ramp Up

- **RED**

- Essential employees only for ensuring safety and security of existing research infrastructure

- **ORANGE**

- Initial ramp up stage where approved employees are permitted to return for the purpose of verifying labs are safe, PPE is available, equipment is operable, and infrastructure is ready to permit a return of researchers; estimated occupancy <20%

- **YELLOW**

- Metered return of researchers (faculty, staff, grad students and post docs) to commence laboratory activities,
 - Department Head or Institute Director prioritization, in consultation with faculty
 - With concurrence of Dean (or designee)
 - Yellow I: estimated <50% occupancy
 - Yellow II: estimated <75% occupancy

- **GREEN**

- General return to full occupancy, but likely with some residual COVID-inspired precautions representing the “new norm”



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Ramp Up Orange

- Goal:
 - Ensure safety and readiness in all laboratory facilities in preparation for ramp up to **YELLOW**.
- Personnel:
 - Led by unit safety/facilities coordinators or their designates,
 - Dept Head/Institute Director Approved Personnel only
 - Personnel whose unit skills and job descriptions make them uniquely qualified to re-start research infrastructure in a safe and efficient manner
 - In collaboration with OPP maintenance, engineering, and janitorial services

Must complete ORANGE planning and implementation before a transition to YELLOW will be granted



ORANGE Tasks

- Inspect/repair all research infrastructure (lighting, hoods, ventilation, cooling/heat, plumbing, chemical storage, safety interlocks, and supply of necessary PPE and sanitation supplies)
- Post all research facilities with maximum occupancy limits (>400sq. ft. per researcher)
- Restrict access to all offices, conference rooms, and gathering sites where effective social distancing cannot be achieved.
- Provide personal hygiene, sanitation, and PPE materials in each laboratory (e.g. soap, towels, gloves, and cleaning solutions)
- Establishing plan for training faculty/students/staff in the proper use of PPE, sanitation protocols, safe ingress/egress behavior, monitoring and reporting of personal health and COVID-related illness, and team/shift plans upon arrival in Condition Yellow
- Establish plan for building ingress/egress and traffic flow to promote social distancing
- Build stations for donning/removal of PPE and practicing personal hygiene at building ingress/egress sites
- Establish a plan for shift-moderated return to laboratories to limit personnel density to acceptable social distancing guidance
- Develop a check in/check out process
- Establish a plan for performing inter-shift sanitation of facilities not normally covered by OPP
- Coordinate with OPP, Janitorial services , Police Services , and EH&S
- Establishing a confidential hot line for reporting deviations from required protocols for ramping up research
- Establish a “Scram Plan” for rapid research ramp down in the event of pandemic resurgence



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Research Ramp Up **Yellow**

- Commence upon authorization by OSVPR, but only if all of **ORANGE** requirements have first been met.
- Require OPP concurrence on building readiness
- Includes all of the **ORANGE** considerations plus:
 - Encouraging maintaining work from home practices for all but research essential tasks
 - Ensuring that PPE and sanitation supplies are available
 - Training of faculty/students/staff in the proper use of PPE, sanitation protocols, safe ingress/egress behavior, monitoring and reporting of personal health and COVID-related illness, and team/shift plans upon arrival in Condition Yellow; **participation is a condition for return to laboratories**
 - Assign faculty, research associates, staff, and graduate assistants to teams/shifts to limit occupancy density
 - Provide maximum flexibility, possibly by bartering shift allocations, to allow work requiring longer than 4 hour shift lengths
 - Use e-Buddy system for solitary work
 - Implement a mandatory check in/check out process
 - Establish procedures for conditions where an e-Buddy is not sufficient (e.g. handling corrosive, bases/acids/toxic gases and substances, or highly reactive, hot, or otherwise dangerous materials)
 - Establishing a confidential hot line for reporting deviations from required protocols for ramping up research
 - Bi-weekly town halls to reflect on lessons learned and new policies and practices to be enforced
- Reserve “Scram Plan” for rapid research ramp down in the event of pandemic resurgence

It is expected that Faculty, Staff, Students, and unit leadership will embrace the new research protocols and will actively serve as monitors and mentors to enforce them as a condition for continued access to research facilities.



Research Ramp Up GREEN

- Commences upon authorization by OSVPR, but only if all **YELLOW** requirements have been met.
- It is in general a return to normal operations. However, it is possible that we will return to a “new normal” that differs significantly from what we have been accustomed to in the past, requiring an enhanced awareness of laboratory protocols intended to promote the safety and welfare of all of our colleagues. It is incumbent on all participants to completely embrace the new protocols and to faithfully execute them as a condition for continued access to research facilities.
- **GREEN** protocols may involve:
 - Continued use of social distancing and PPE in all laboratory environments to promote safety
 - Maintenance of PPE and sanitation supplies in sufficient quantities to permit continued operations, albeit possibly at reduced capacity, in future crises
 - Continuation of safety town halls to maintain an awareness of restricted research protocols and readiness to enforce required practices
 - Sustaining a “Scram Plan” for rapid research ramp down in the event of pandemic resurgence



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So, where are we now?

- OSVPR polled Units last week as to their readiness to enter **ORANGE**
- EMS Research Ramp Up Task Force has built plans for each unit; **ORANGE** phase work is nearing completion
- Therefore, we advocated for an early transition to **YELLOW**; awaiting OSVPR decision
- OPP needs to be involved with readiness certification
- We need everyone to help implement the plan to achieve and maintain **YELLOW**



What do we need from you?

- Today we transitioned from **RED** to **ORANGE**
- Only Approved Personnel are permitted in facilities during **ORANGE**
- We have been granted permission to transition to **YELLOW** when ready:
 - Respect the work remotely directive
 - We are working with OPP to get readiness certification for our facilities
 - Faculty and Dept Heads/Institute Directors need to work together to establish priority access for **YELLOW**
 - Work with your safety/facilities coordinators to establish a team/shift structure that allows equitable access to facilities.
 - All faculty/graduate students/post docs/staff need to participate in unit level safety briefing as a condition for re-accessing labs under **YELLOW**
 - Your safety/facilities coordinators, in consultation with your Dept Head/Institute Director, have the authority to act on processes and protocols to ensure a safe and productive return



Thoughts, Questions????

Travel and field work

- All University travel is restricted to June 30, with limited exceptions
- All travel must be deemed essential, and approved by Provost
- Travel approval requests should be routed through Department Head to ADGER, who will then process them through the Provost
- A couple of things to be sure to consider in the travel request memo:
 - Project affected (number, title, performance period and sponsor)
 - Individual required to travel (name, title)
 - Why the travel is mandatory (e.g. field work is essential to avoid defaulting on a project soon to end.)
 - Is the travel in private or University conveyance?
- No travel permitted until approval is confirmed
- TSN registration will be required for international travel
- Only one employee per vehicle to ensure social distancing (CDC guidance is 6' radius, or approximately 180 square feet)
- Personal Protection Equipment protocol (masks, gloves, and sanitizers) mandatory



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Great spots for information

- <https://www.ems.psu.edu/ems-coronavirus-information>
- <http://gradschool.psu.edu/covid19/frequently-asked-questions-related-to-covid-19/>
- <https://virusinfo.psu.edu/>
- <https://www.research.psu.edu/>

