**Research Restart Checklist**

The University of Texas at Austin is committed to reducing the spread of COVID-19 to protect the health and safety of our community. The Research Restart Checklist includes resources and procedures to help principal investigators (PIs) plan the restart of their research operations.

**STEP 1**

Review the [PI Research Restart Toolkit](https://research.utexas.edu/research-restart-toolkit), which includes policies and best practices for the following:

* Social distancing
* Keeping your research space clean
* Face coverings for general use
* Research-specific PPE
* Illness in research personnel, including symptom tracking, self-monitoring, and what to do if someone in your group shows symptoms of COVID-19
* Contact tracing
* Parking and transportation

Review the OVPR [COVID-19 Research FAQ](https://research.utexas.edu/covid-19-research-faq/) page for answers to your questions about research and research policy in the context of the COVID-19 outbreak.

**STEP 2**

Complete the checklist below (begins on p. 2).

**STEP 3**

Conduct your research safely and update your ADR with any pertinent information such as confirmed COVID-19 cases in your lab.

Preparing

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ITEM | Complete | N/A | Notes |
| Identify priority levels for research activities. |  |  |  |
| Establish plans to safely ramp-down labs in case another shelter-in-place order is announced. Refer to [EHS Laboratory Safety](https://ehs.utexas.edu/programs/labsafety/) about how to secure hazards or safely suspend research operations in your laboratory. |  |  |  |
| Identify researchers who can continue to work remotely and those who are willing to return to campus. Do not allow all researchers to return to the lab at once.  |  |  |  |
| Ensure all necessary materials to safely conduct research, such as face coverings, PPE as needed, hand sanitizer, disinfectant, and wipes, are available for your group. Consult the [PI Research Restart Toolkit](https://research.utexas.edu/research-restart-toolkit) for guidance on procuring PPE. |  |  |  |
| Create a sign-in/sign-out log for your research space. This can be paper-based or digital. Each person who works in your research space should keep this record current with days/times they were in the research space. These records must be retained for 30 days. |  |  |  |
| Establish procedures for the event in which a researcher in the lab tests positive for COVID-19, following the guidance outlined in the [PI Research Restart Toolkit](https://research.utexas.edu/research-restart-toolkit). |  |  |  |
| Calculate the square footage of your research spaces and determine how many personnel are permitted in each room, following the [Research Restart density policy](https://research.utexas.edu/research-restart-toolkit) of one person per 200 sq. ft. and no more than one person in spaces <300 sq. ft. Post a map at the lab’s entrance with the maximum allowable occupancy of each room/area to maintain physical distancing. |  |  |  |
| Establish a work schedule for returning personnel. Note that research spaces cannot operate 24/7. All buildings will be closed from 10 p.m. – 6 a.m. daily, and all researchers must vacate both labs and offices during these hours. |  |  |  |
| Use tape to mark out 6-ft spaces in high traffic areas and bottlenecks in the lab, such as near sinks or entry/exit doors. |  |  |  |
| Consider developing one-way traffic patterns in labs to minimize interactions. |  |  |  |
| If possible, rearrange equipment to create a 6-foot distance (minimum) between users. |  |  |  |

Communications

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ITEM | Complete | N/A | Notes |
| Create contact list including all lab personnel, principal investigator, lab administrative director, research operations manager, and building manager. |  |  |   |
| Ensure the contact list is saved where it can be remotely accessed by everyone in the lab. Include home and cell phone numbers.  |  |  |  |
| Test your text string, group chat, or email group to facilitate emergency communication among lab researchers and staff. |  |  |  |
| Ensure that emergency contacts listed on lab placards are up to date and posted outside lab doors. |  |  |  |
| Create a schedule of when researchers are in the lab to ensure social distancing policies can be followed and maintained. |  |  |  |

Laboratory Restart Walkthrough

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ITEM | Complete | N/A | Notes |
| Decontaminate high-touch surfaces in the lab, e.g., light switches and door handles. |  |  |  |
| Decontaminate and clean any reusable materials that may be contaminated with biological material. |  |  |  |
| Conduct inventory of research materials. |  |  |  |
| Conduct inventory of cold storage units to ensure that samples were appropriately preserved during the shutdown period. |  |  |  |
| Confirm the inventory of Controlled Substances, document in logbook, and ensure they match with pre-shutdown values. |  |  |  |
| Ensure all radioactive materials/sources are properly secured in locked housing (refrigerator, freezer, cabinet, or lockbox). |  |  |  |
| ITEM | Complete | N/A | Notes |
| Check gas cylinder levels on tanks that were left on to maintain critical functions. |  |  |  |
| Check the function of all appliances, computers, microscopes, hot plates, sterilizer ovens, water baths, and other equipment that were disconnected from energy sources for extended periods. Ensure proper procedures are followed for bringing them back online. |  |  |  |
| Test eye-wash stations and other emergency safeguards.  |  |  |  |
| Survey the laboratory for unsafe conditions. |  |  |  |
| Look for signs of leakage from hazardous material containers, waste containers, etc. |  |  |  |
| Look for signs of water damage or leaks (e.g., wet, discolored ceiling tiles, stained cabinets, or standing water on the floor or in cabinets) and contact Facilities if any water damage is identified. |  |  |  |
| Check cold rooms for evidence of mold growth. |  |  |  |
| Make note of unusual conditions needing the attention of EHS or Facilities. |  |  |  |
| Survey chemical storage for expired or outdated chemicals and signs of reaction formation. Schedule EHS pickup for any full chemical waste containers. |  |  |  |
| Refer to the [Laboratory Safety Manual](https://ehs.utexas.edu/programs/labsafety/lab-safety-manual.php) and the [Lab Evaluation Guide](https://ehs.utexas.edu/programs/labsafety/safety-inspections.php). |  |  |  |

Lab Procedures

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ITEM | Complete | N/A | Notes |
| Follow the guidance from your associate dean for research (ADR) for lab re-start policies. |  |  |  |
| Consult with the [Office of Research Support and Compliance](https://research.utexas.edu/ors/animal-research/) or [Animal Resources Center](https://research.utexas.edu/arc/) about current animal care recommendations. |  |  |  |
| Consult with the [Office of Research Support and Compliance](https://research.utexas.edu/ors/animal-research/) about current human subject research recommendations. |  |  |  |
| Consult with the [Office of Research Support and Compliance](https://research.utexas.edu/ors/animal-research/) and [Environmental Health & Safety](https://ehs.utexas.edu/) about current biosafety recommendations. |  |  |  |

Shipping/Receiving

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ITEM | Complete | N/A | Notes |
| Order any necessary research supplies to conduct research approved in your restart request. Order early to allow for longer-than-usual shipping times. |  |  |  |
| Consult with your associate dean for research (ADR) to determine how shipments and distribution of packages are being handled for your building. Many shipping/distribution workflows had to change during the pause in laboratory activities.  |  |  |  |

Waste Management

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ITEM | Complete | N/A | Notes |
| Ensure waste management plans are in place before starting any work. |  |  |  |
| Ensure you can [place a request](https://ehs.utexas.edu/programs/hazardouswaste/chemical-waste-disposal.php) for chemical hazardous waste to be collected. |  |  |  |
| Ensure appropriate containers are available for solid biological waste. If your lab does not have a routine biowaste pick up, [request removal](https://ehs.utexas.edu/programs/hazardouswaste/chp3-biological-waste-disposal.php).  |  |  |  |
| Ensure appropriate waste containers are available for radioactive material and [request a radioactive waste pickup](https://ehs.utexas.edu/programs/radiation/documents/RadioactiveWastePickupForm2017.xlsx) from EHS.  |  |  |  |

For any questions or concerns regarding lab safety, please contact EHS Laboratory Staff (ehs-labstaff@austin.utexas.edu).