Montana State University Department of Earth Sciences

Comprehensive Field Safety Guide

This guide was developed by Dr. Madison Myers and Meredith Knowles from the Montana State University Earth Sciences Department. While this is provided here as a resource, please credit them in any reproduction.

**How to Use this Guide:** Welcome! The goal of this document is to provide resources and guidance to a trip leader in Earth Sciences on how to facilitate a field experience that allows all participants to feel heard, safe, and included. A trip leader can include faculty and instructors, as well as graduate students leading undergraduates and/or other graduate students.

**When to apply this document:** Field Trips (1 day or multi-day), field camp, research trips, conferences and other academic experiences that occur outside of the classroom, affiliated with the University but off campus. Implement PRIOR to the trip (not the morning of) so there is enough time to review and process. The first time a particular group implements this guide, plan for 1 hour of discussion. For subsequent trips, can be completed in ~15 minutes.

**Layout of this toolkit:**

1. Seeds of Safety: Things to keep in mind while having discussions
2. Statement of Shared Values
3. Bystander Intervention: Tools to support someone who is being harmed
4. Physical Safety and Pre-Trip Trainings
5. Returning from the Field: Reporting, resources and how do we give and receive feedback?
6. Off-campus Trip Agreement

**Step-by-Step Checklist for Trip Leads:**

* Trip leader reviews this entire document
* Read (and possibly expand upon) the Seeds of Safety with your group
* Review the Shared Value Statement
* Start conversation around what the expected trip includes, and what concerns might arise
* Have participants check in with a neighbor on how they are feeling mentally and physically about the day / trip, to the extent they feel comfortable
* Go over what Bystander Intervention means, and review some relevant examples
* Agreeing on consequences and reviewing resources (giving and receiving feedback)

The statements in this document expand off of the MSU Code of Conduct to better serve our students and faculty in off-campus settings. Our goal is to create an environment which ensures everyone feels supported and able to thrive in the field and receives a sense of belonging in our academic community.

**Moving forward,** each page will begin with a prompt to bring the team into the conversation. It will then have an objective that should be discussed as a group. Lastly, there will be an optional exercise that can be undertaken to expand upon concepts.

**Foundations of Inclusive Interactions: Things to keep in mind while having discussions**

*PROMPT: Learning to communicate effectively is a skill developed over a lifetime—but not one often taught directly in academic settings. This section serves to prime the whole team for more effective and inclusive interactions. A first-time group should read over the list below in its entirety, but you may choose to emphasize a select few points depending on your group and time constraints.*

1. **Respect:** It is okay to disagree respectfully. Avoid put downs and try to show support. Allow space so that only one person speaks at a time and try to implement active listening.
2. **Use “I” statements:** In order to decrease common stereotypes, we ask everyone to use I statements and speak only for yourself and from your experiences. This will help us all to limit any tendencies to generalize individual comments to entire groups.
3. **Active listening:** Learning how to listen to the people that share their stories with you is a key aspect of being an ally and growing in community.
4. **Take risks and expect discomfort:** We ask that you contribute to discussions and exercises by sharing your thoughts, feelings, and experiences. Sometimes this may involve personal discomfort and risk taking. It is up to you the degree of risk or disclosure you make.
5. **Every question is important:** Questions are learning opportunities; therefore all questions are encouraged. Be aware that the trip leader may not have the answers to some of your questions, as we are also always continuing to learn and grow.
6. **Humility and feedback:** We all make mistakes. When others share critical feedback, it is important to approach the interaction with humility and patience. Approach the situation as an “Ouch and Educate”. How can I/the group be accountable and grow from this? Is someone willing/able to educate, or should the group research the issue later?
7. **Triggers and honoring safety:** Some conversations maypossiblytrigger past experiences or memories in participants. You may pull a leader aside or excuse yourself if you feel uncomfortable participating in the conversation. Honor and be aware of others’ safety boundaries that may be different from your own.
8. **Honor confidentiality:** Safety is the cornerstone. As such, people must feel a level of trust and support to be able to share personal thoughts, feelings, and experiences. Note that employees of the university are Mandatory Reporters\*. Consider shared personal experiences as private property—ask for permission before sharing individual pronouns or thoughts outside the group.
9. **Be kind to yourself and others:** Inclusivity is hard work. We are all growing and confronting what it means to learn and unlearn within the context of our society. Give yourself a break. Vocalize your need for boundaries and respect when others request them.
10. **Be thoughtful and curious about communication style:** Notice how the ways you or others communicate affects the group. What is appreciated? Where is there room to grow?

*ACTIVITY: Ask, “Does anyone want to add anything else to this list?” Sometimes you will get a response, sometimes you won’t. Either is fine. Again, the importance in asking questions is sharing agency, and actively decentralizing power. All team members should have opportunities to contribute and mold the inclusive culture of our department.*

*PROMPT: When engaging in a conversation with your team, it is important to set the stage for expectations. In reading out the Shared Values, you are communicating what is important to the department, but also important to you. This introduction sets the tone for your team’s experience and helps to signal the culture to which our department aspires. Read out the following. Depending on the experience levels with the group, summarizing may be appropriate. Students on their first field experience would benefit from having it read aloud in its entirety.*

**Statement of Shared Values**

The Earth Sciences Department acknowledges that threats to field safety are not only physical, but emotional, cultural, social, and mental. We are therefore committed to creating spaces free of:

* **Discrimination:** Conduct that is based upon an individual’s race, color, religion, national origin, creed, occupation or previous occupation, veteran’s status, sex, age, political ideas, marital or family status, pregnancy, physical or mental disability, genetic information, gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation that excludes an individual from participation, denies the individual the benefits of opportunity, treats the individual differently or otherwise adversely affects them.
* **Harassment:** Verbal, psychological, graphic and/or written abuse directed at another.
* **Sexual Assault:** Any actual or attempted sexual contact with another person without that person’s consent.
* **Sexual Harassment:** Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Sexualized banter and jokes are considered sexual harassment.
* **Bullying:** Threatening, humiliating, coercive, or intimidating conduct that causes harm to, interferes with, or sabotages a person's ability to succeed in their path.
* **Hazing:** Any activity expected of someone joining or participating in a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses, or endangers them regardless of a person's willingness to participate. Specifically, activities for the purpose of initiation or to maintain affiliation with that group.
* **Microaggressions:** A comment or action that subtly and often unconsciously or unintentionally expresses a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalized group.

*ACTIVITY/EXAMPLE: Giving examples for each of these shared values may not be necessary. If a team member asks about a certain term or scenario—pose that question to the group. (I.e. “Does anyone have an example of a microaggression they would like to share? “) This will prompt a discussion to engage all members of the team—and illustrates that everyone has information worth sharing, not just the team lead. Sometimes examples can produce laughter. Remain respectful, thoughtful and inquisitive as team members grapple with these values.*

**Agreeing on/Discussing Consequences**

Conflict in life is inevitable. Some consequences are very clear cut—and some aren’t. Some consequences can be more damaging than healing (for example, involving law enforcement). How do you as a group agree to handle different degrees of conflict? What are the consequences of violating the Shared Values? Discuss a scenario in which a person is accused/checked for violating the group’s shared environment—can a discussion and apology be more productive than immediate expulsion from the project? What would that look like? What is the role of group members and group leaders in addressing or enforcing consequences?

**Example Talking Points to Set Expectations and Consequences for:**

* Housing – shared? Cooking/cleaning responsibilities? Bedtimes?
* Driving – speed limits, appropriate reactions to conditions, leaving in the morning
* Experience level with the field/outdoors and areas of concern

**Bystander Intervention – Tools to support someone being harmed**

*PROMPT: The following page is a brief summary of Bystander Intervention tactics. Share with your group that these are skills to help them navigate all kinds of scenarios. Stress that just because a situation isn’t illegal or doesn’t seem physically threatening, doesn’t mean it cannot be harmful. Left unchecked, exclusionary behaviors performed by or witnessed by the group can cause distrust and dissolve pathways of communication. Therefore, utilizing bystander intervention tactics can actually keep the whole team physically and emotionally safer by keeping communication and trust flowing through the group.*

Bystander Intervention is recognizing a potentially harmful situation or interaction that is occurring to someone around you and choosing to respond in a way that could positively influence the outcome. These could be in response to any of the above exclusionary behaviors, and although this group may have agreed upon a code of conduct, there may be internal and external situations that arise. Intervention, however, can be foreign and challenging, typically requiring practice to intuitively respond to what can be a range of situations.

Let’s review the 5 D’s that can be used as tools when implementing Bystander Intervention. Please note that all of these D’s are equally valued and are not listed in a particular order:

* Direct – confront the situation
* Distract- take an indirect approach to de-escalate the situation. Deflect attention away.
* Delegate – seek help from a third party
* Delay – check in with the person being affected after an incident. Follow up. Offer support.
* Document- Create a record to build a pattern of behavior – **don't share without victims' permission!**

*ACTIVITY: Real-world scenarios*

Example field crew scenario: Inclement weather has limited the number of days available for sampling at remote field sites, causing a last-minute change of plans. The team leader pushes for long days in the field. When the most junior member of the crew asks about stopping to replenish water and eat, several others loudly complain about them slowing down the team and start making comments about their physical ability.

Example post workday scenario: At the end of a day of data collection and interviews, all members of the party are exhausted and heading back to the hotel. The trip leader sees a bar on the way home and tells everyone they should go in and have a drink, not knowing that two of the three students don’t drink alcohol.

1. What power dynamics may be at play?
2. What could you do to intervene in this situation?
3. What may be the consequences of action or inaction?
4. What can you do ahead of time to reduce the impact or occurrence of this behavior?

*The chart below offers other examples and possible responses. The leader is encouraged to pre-select a few and let students attempt to work through the scenario and alternate responses.*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Example Situation** | **Bystander Intervention Example** | **Communication Approach** |
| “You are so articulate” or “You speak the language so well.” | “I’m just curious. What makes you say that?” | INQUIREAsk the speaker to elaborate. This will give you more information about where they are coming from and may also help the speaker become aware of what they are implying.  |
| Saying “That’s so gay” | “When I hear that remark, I’m offended too, because I feel that it marginalizes an entire group of people that I am friends with.”  | USE IMPACT AND “I” STATEMENTS A clear, nonthreatening way to directly address these issues is to focus on oneself rather than on the person. It communicates the impact of a situation while avoiding blaming or accusing the other and reduces defensiveness.  |
| You notice that your female colleague is being frequently interrupted during a committee meeting.  | Responder addressing the group: “\_\_\_\_\_ brings up a good point. I didn’t get a chance to hear all of it. Can \_\_\_\_\_\_repeat it?”  | REFRAME: Create a different way to look at a situation. KEY PHRASES: “What would happen if....” “Could there be another way to look at this...” “Let’s reframe this...” “How would you feel if this happened to your\_\_\_\_...”  |
| A senior colleague chews out or raises their voice to a student/younger colleague.  | DELAY: After the event, a peer or onlooker checks in with the student to see how they can support them.  | DOCUMENT: Look into bullying reporting strategies and submit a formal complaint against that senior colleague.  |
| While sitting around the campfire, one person asks everyone who they think is the most attractive person in the department | DISTRACT: Completely change the subject.“What did you think of the series finale of Game of Thrones?” or “Look at this awesome picture of a bear” | Run interference—before a subject can escalate simply change the subject. Without having to be directly confrontation, distract the members to an alternative topic that is interesting but doesn’t lead to or expand on sexual harassment. |

**Physical Safety and Pre-Trip Trainings**

*Trip leaders—feel free to edit as appropriate for your trip.*

To Bring for aHiking/Camping outdoor based experience:

* *Foundational documents (assignments, permit, contact information)*
* *First aid kit (*[*https://www.redcross.org/store/be-red-cross-ready-first-aid-kit/329165.html*](https://www.redcross.org/store/be-red-cross-ready-first-aid-kit/329165.html)*)*
* *Appropriate clothing/outerwear*
* *Sufficient water and food*
* *Close-toed shoes or appropriate shoes*
* *Communication and/or GPS device (phone, InReach)*
* *Bear Spray, bug spray*
* *Sunscreen, sunhat and sunglasses*
* *Medications (ibuprofen, aspirin, Benadryl, antacids)*
* *Toiletries*
* *Camping gear (tent, sleeping bag and pad, stove with fuel, water, cooking gear, headlamp)*
* *Field gear (hammer, hand lens, field notebook, computer, camera)*
* *High visibility gear (orange vest, road cones)*
* *Winter Car Kit (blanket, chains, handwarmers, etc.)*

To Bring for aconference/interview/indoor based event:

* *Appropriate clothing for event (professional attire, good walking shoes, etc.)*
* *Medications (ibuprofen, aspirin, Benadryl, antacids)*
* *Toiletries*
* *Relevant documents (poster, notepad, computer/charger)*

To Do:

* Formulate Emergency Plan—see below to develop an emergency contact scenario for yourself, and then fill out the back page and leave copy with a Earth Science Department contact remaining at base/Bozeman

Resources available to support participants

1. Wilderness Field Aid training: <https://www.montana.edu/outdoorrecreation/wilderness_courses.html>
2. Outdoor Program and Field Gear Check out: <https://www.montana.edu/outdoorrecreation/>
3. Emergency Evacuation Fund – no questions asked financial support

One-page additional handouts available:

1. How to change a flat tire
2. Menstruation in the field
3. Intro to Backpacking

**Emergency Contact Information**

Please list the contact information for the trip leader, as well as the people you are in close contact with during your field experience. Then, list the contact information for the closest emergency service (e.g., ranger station, urgent care, search and rescue) in the area you will be working.

Primary Contact in Bozeman: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_; Phone number:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Department of Earth Sciences: M-F 8am- 5pm, cannot receive text messages: 406-994-3331

Person 1 on trip - \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_; Phone number:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Person 2 on trip - \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_; Phone number:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Service - \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_; Phone number:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\* Here is a good example of reflecting back on the Seeds of Safety. If you do not feel comfortable sharing your phone number with the group you are in, by this time you should have built a framework that would allow you to let the group know that you are uncomfortable with sharing your phone number.

**Returning from the Field- Resources and Giving and Receiving Feedback**

Debriefing—consider different debriefing formats depending on the activity and whether a specific incident occurred. Even if no incident occurs, debriefing would still be a good idea.

1. Self-check in – does action need to be taken?
2. Facilitate debrief conversation—invite others to reach out to connect
3. Anonymous exit survey through Qualtrics
4. Leaders debrief together—grad leader debrief with advisor on leadership and communication in addition to field tasks
5. Report to department head to determine appropriate course of action

Campus Resources

1. Counseling and Psychological Services (*NOT mandatory reporters*): (406) 994-4531
2. VOICE Center (*The MSU VOICE Center is exempt from mandatory reporting and provides free and confidential services for all people impacted by sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, and harassment; including friends, family, and loved ones of survivors*): General Office: (406)-994-7662 OR 24-Hour Support: Call or Text (406)-994-7069
3. DISC (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Student Common): Tel: (406) 994-5801
4. Disability (Accessibility) Services (can help come up with an accommodation for a reoccurring challenge): Tel: (406) 994-2824
5. Office of Institutional Equity (will file an official report): Tel: (406) 994-2042
6. Department Head – Dr. Michael Babcock Tel: (406) 994-5175
7. Anonymous Box outside of Trap 226

Participant Agreement to Read, Fill out, and Give to Trip Leader

*(CONFIDENTIAL DOCUMENT FOR TO KEEP FOR EMERGENCIES, SHREAD UPON RETURN)*

Off-campus trips present opportunities and challenges that extend beyond normal campus conditions. In addition to the Montana State University (MSU) Code of Conduct, I as a participant also have looked over and discussed the set of expectations for this off-campus trip in order to ensure the health and safety of everyone. After going through this document and reading the information below, please have both the trip leader and the participant sign this document.

1. I will actively participate in all pre-field trip debriefings. If I do not attend these orientations, I understand I will not be able to participate in the trip.
2. I will respect the agreement created with the Trip Coordinators.
3. The trip ends upon return to the MSU campus. I will return with my group unless prior arrangements have been made and approved by the sponsoring unit. MSU is not responsible for any person who is approved to travel separate from the group.
4. I understand that MSU does not provide health, accident, disability, or other insurance to trip participants. I have health insurance coverage and I have contacted my insurance company to receive appropriate documentation and will carry it with me at all times. I agree to be responsible for payment of all medical treatment while on this trip.
5. I agree to inform the trip sponsor of any existing medical conditions that might require treatment, accommodation for participation in trip activities, or about which medical personnel should be informed.
6. I understand that I represent MSU and that this is a University trip. Therefore, I agree to be bound by the rules established for the trip, University rules, policies and regulations, and further agree to follow all laws of the city, state, or country while on the trip. I understand it is important to the success of the present trip and the continuance of future programs that participants observe standards of conduct that would not compromise MSU in the eyes of the individuals and organizations with which it has dealings. Students on trips will uphold the MSU Student Code of Conduct: <http://www2.montana.edu/policy/>.
7. I understand that the MSU may terminate my participation for failure to behave and act in accordance with the program’s regulations on conduct, for failure to follow the instructions and directions of the program trip coordinators and/or supervisors, or for any acts of conduct which are detrimental to or incompatible with the interest, harmony, comfort, or welfare of the program as a whole. If my participation is terminated for these reasons, I agree that there will be no refund of payments and I understand I will be sent home immediately at my own expense.
8. I will contact the sponsoring unit and/or MSU’s Disability Services office if I need reasonable accommodations to participate in the trip as soon as possible so that appropriate arrangements can be made to allow me to participate. I understand that if I do not seek accommodations in a timely manner, the accommodation may not be able to be provided.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_EMERGENCY INFORMATION\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Emergency Contact and phone number, including relationship to participant |  |
| Health insurance provider/policy number |  |
| Chronic health conditions |  |
| Food Allergies, Medications and Severity |  |

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_EMERGENCY PLAN\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

In case of emergency, what is the plan? E.g., Emergencies include: injury – severe and minor, allergic reactions, separation in the field, aggressive outsider to the group

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Trip Leader Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_