

University of New Mexico

UNM Digital Repository

HSC Chancellor Messages During COVID-19

HSC Institutional and Academic Materials

Spring 5-14-2020

2020-05-14 A Message from the Executive Vice Chancellor

Richard Larson

RLarson@salud.unm.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/hsc_covid19_chancellor



Part of the [Health and Medical Administration Commons](#), and the [Public Health Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Larson, Richard. "2020-05-14 A Message from the Executive Vice Chancellor." (2020).

https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/hsc_covid19_chancellor/3

This Brief is brought to you for free and open access by the HSC Institutional and Academic Materials at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in HSC Chancellor Messages During COVID-19 by an authorized administrator of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact amywinter@unm.edu, lsloane@salud.unm.edu, sahark@unm.edu.



HEALTH SCIENCES

OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR

[View this email in your browser](#)

As a Health Sciences Center and a University, we are beginning our Phased Approach to Return to Full Operations in each non-clinical mission area. The President announced Monday that we remain in Limited Operations until June 1, and we are using this time to plan a safe, phased return to campus where necessary. As we heard from the Governor yesterday, we are doing this in a limited manner with an emphasis on the safety of our internal and external communities. We are ensuring that all members of our community who can remain remote continue to work and learn remotely during this Phase, so as to protect our community. Some employees, however, will need to return to campus when it is appropriate in order to complete their work functions in our mission areas. Supervisors should not begin asking employees to return to campus until they receive official notice from their leadership. In order to allow for planning, we will be sharing messages over the next several days that outline the plan for each non-clinical mission area. Today, we begin with a message from our Executive Vice Chancellor and Vice Chancellor for Research, Dr. Richard Larson, with a message regarding research operations.

A Message from the Executive Vice Chancellor and Vice Chancellor for Research

Phased Approach to Return to Full Operations in Research

To reduce epidemic spread and the risk of contracting COVID-19, we have been under limited operations. Yesterday President Stokes announced continuation of our current limited operation at least through June 1. During this time, please continue to follow the research restrictions released on March 20, 2020. The Health Sciences Center Office of Research site also contains information on specific research-related updates (including the Research Continuity Guidelines for both [Laboratories & Research Facilities](#) and [Clinical Trial Research Faculty & Staff](#)), and can be [accessed here](#).

Nonetheless, during this time of limited operations, we would like to begin preparing for Phase 1 of returning to full operations, so we wanted to give our researchers a “heads up” to begin preparations for when we may move to more toward full operations (sometime after June 1).

First, for research activity that is continuing during our limited operations, please follow COVID-Safe Practices:

1. Limit operations to remote work to the greatest extent possible.
2. Arrange workplaces to provide for a minimum of 6 feet of distance between individuals wherever possible.
3. Close common areas where personnel are likely to congregate wherever possible, or modify them to minimize contact.
4. Provide for all meetings to take place remotely whenever possible
5. Cover your mouth and nose with a face mask when around others and when moving through common spaces. Follow all PPE required by OSHA when in a laboratory (see instruction below). Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Routinely and regularly disinfect common contact sites (keyboards, door handles, multi-user equipment, etc.). For BSL-2 and BSL-3 work, please follow the PPE requirements for these activities.
6. All employees should be provided with appropriate face coverings and should wear them in the workplace.
7. Train all employees on daily cleaning and disinfecting protocol, hygiene, and respiratory etiquette (e.g., covering coughs).
8. Make handwashing, sanitizer, and other hygiene support available to employees.
9. Screen employees before they enter the workplace each day (verbally or with a written form or app). Send employees home who are experiencing the following COVID-19 symptoms, and direct them to obtain free testing through DOH: Fever, cough, shortness of breath, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, and/or loss of taste or smell.
10. Prohibit employees with known close contact to a person who is lab-confirmed to have COVID-19 to return to work until the end of the 14-day self-isolation period.

Second, in preparation for Phase 1 of returning to full operations in research, we encourage you to look at the procedures below that are currently being discussed. **During the remaining time in limited operations, please begin to make preparations to be able to meet the guidelines below. Please note that these are not finalized guidelines, but provided so you can begin to think about preparing your laboratories. We intend to have more finalized guidelines in the coming days.**

Physical Distancing in the Laboratory and Research Spaces:

1. Only personnel with a need to access physical locations to advance research should be on-site. Even those personnel should minimize time on campus. All others should remain

sheltered-in-place and/or off-site to help maintain physical distancing. Meetings should be conducted remotely whenever possible.

2. In an effort to minimize the number of workers on campus, each laboratory on campus should operate in a limited capacity. Current *estimated* room occupancy stands at 25-50% capacity (subject to change). To that end, shift plans and schedules should be created and maintained for each laboratory. For instance, shifts could be organized by hour (e.g., 7am-3pm, 3pm-11pm), or by day (e.g., Monday-Wednesday-Friday and Tuesday-Thursday-Saturday).
3. Labs may not be authorized for access unless the following are defined by the lab PI and readily available upon request to the Biosafety Officers and, in addition, the Deans, Cancer Center Director, Clinical and Translational Science Center Director or Vice Chancellor for Research who may have responsibility for the space:
 - a. How many individuals will be in a space at any given time.
 - b. If necessary, a clear process to ensure work shifts do not accidentally overlap.
 - c. A listing of supplies provided to maintain safety and their storage location: face coverings, soap, hand sanitizers, cleaning materials, first aid kits.
 - d. Procedures and schedules to clean/wipe down shared items, equipment, carts, and work surfaces prior to usage by others. Consult the [EPA List N for approved disinfectants against SARS-CoV-2](#).
 - e. A process to maintain access and activity logs, in order to trace contact should someone become sick with coronavirus.
4. Physical distance between people should always be maintained
 - a. Maintain a distance of at least 6 feet between people unless PPE appropriate for the context is used. Laboratories and facilities with limited space that cannot ensure that personnel will meet these public health requirements must remain off-limits. Some locations may choose to reconfigure interior space to relieve bottlenecks and maintain space between research personnel.
 - b. Do not gather in groups of size more than what is limited by the county officials. Research ramp-up should not result in crowded spaces or mass gatherings.
6. Cover your mouth and nose with a face mask when around others and when moving through common spaces. Follow all PPE required by OSHA when in a laboratory (see instruction below). Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Routinely and regularly disinfect common contact sites (keyboards, door handles, multi-user equipment, etc.). For BSL-2 and BSL-3 work, please follow the PPE requirements for these activities.
7. Screen employees before they enter the workplace each day. Send employees to employee health who are experiencing the following COVID-19 symptoms: Fever, cough, shortness of breath, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat and/or loss of taste or smell. We are looking at potential IT options, but this may have to be done manually.
8. Employees who come to work and are found to have symptoms should report to employee health to determine the most appropriate course of action, since they may or may not be COVID-19 positive.

9. Prohibit employees with known close contact to a person who is lab-confirmed to have COVID-19 to return to work until the end of the 14-day self-isolation period.

Required Cleaning Procedures: We have been stocking up on these supplies in CRLS, but to be safe PIs may wish to obtain their own cleaning supplies to assure availability.

1. Decontaminate work surfaces and equipment with appropriate disinfectants. Use [EPA-registered and approved disinfectants](#).
2. Disinfectants should be used with label claims to be effective against SARS-CoV-2. Follow manufacturer's recommendations for use, such as dilution, contact time, and safe handling. For example, you may use **EPA registered disinfectants** that contain 10% bleach solutions (0.5% sodium hypochlorite), ethanol /quaternary ammonium or ≥ 0.5 hydrogen peroxide. Notify BHC (TMuller@salud.unm.edu or NDonart@salud.unm.edu) if you are utilizing another disinfectant so that a check of the disinfectant's active ingredients can be evaluated, or consult the [EPA List N for approved disinfectants against SARS-CoV-2](#). Note: IBC/BHC approval is required to work directly with SARS-CoV-2 or known / suspected SARS-CoV-2 samples. All faculty and laboratory managers must ensure their personnel are using aseptic techniques when processing specimens. This includes disinfection of all surfaces and equipment using **EPA registered disinfectants** that contain 10% bleach solutions (0.5% sodium hypochlorite), ethanol /quaternary ammonium or ≥ 0.5 hydrogen peroxide, both inside and outside of the biosafety cabinet. BSC surfaces must be rinsed with water 70% isopropanol after applying bleach to prevent metal corrosion.
3. All manipulation of potentially infectious materials must be performed in certified biosafety cabinets per standard BSL-2 or BSL-3 requirements or as approved by institutional biosafety committee or biosafety officer.

Required Personal Protective Equipment:

1. Please refer to the [CDC video demonstration](#) of cleaning procedures as well as donning (putting on) personal protective equipment (PPE).
2. In addition to wet labs and research environments, masks must always be worn in common areas and open labs. **All personnel will have to provide their own [cloth mask that meets CDC requirements](#) until the HSC received a shipment of cloth masks.**
3. Per OSHA requirements and biosafety policies, all lab staff should have dedicated PPE within your laboratory for your experiments, including lab coats and appropriate facial protection.
4. Per UNMHSC Biosafety Training for BSL-1 and BSL-2 laboratories, do not wear PPE, other than masks, outside of the non-lab areas. Depending on the number of labs you have and the nature of the work, researchers may need multiple lab coats for each area to avoid potential cross contamination. Wear a lab coat or solid-front back-fastening gown, preferably with a knit or grip cuff. For BSL-2 and BSL-3 activity, overage of the wrists is very important. Avoid using an open-cuff lab coat inside a biosafety cabinet as aerosols generated inside the cabinet will contaminate your jewelry, wrists and forearms as well as the inside of the lab coat cuff.

5. For BSL-2 activity, ensure that your gloves extend over the sleeve of your lab coat. An opening at the wrist will allow aerosols generated within the biosafety cabinet to contaminate your wrist and forearm, extending to your elbow. Sleeve covers can be worn to ensure coverage of the wrist and will also minimize contamination of the sleeves of your lab coat.
6. Each person in the lab should have their own pair of safety glasses. These can be sanitized after each use with 70% isopropanol and allowed to air dry. Wear a chin-length face shield or safety glasses and a mask if working outside of the biosafety cabinet with biohazards on the bench. This will protect the researcher's facial mucous membranes from exposure in the event a spill outside the biosafety cabinet during transfer of material to and from the incubator.
7. **Each person in the lab must have their own cloth face covering.** N95 masks and other high demand PPE must be used only when appropriate and required for the laboratory environment and experiment. Cloth face coverings should be sanitized often. This can be accomplished by machine washing.
8. Except for masks, remove PPE before leaving the laboratory. Placing a hook within the lab area will facilitate this requirement.
9. Any questions that researchers may have regarding proper use of PPE in their specific situation, they should follow standard procedures for biosafety as outlined in our "Biosafety Training for BSL-1 and BSL-2 laboratories." This includes not wearing gloves outside of the laboratory. If there are any questions regarding proper BSL-1 or BSL-2 training or use, please review your learning central training or contact the Office of Research Biosafety Team (TMuller@salud.unm.edu or NDonart@salud.unm.edu).

Clinical Research and related Human Participant research:

We appreciate everyone's heroic efforts to move study visits and assessments to remote and virtual platforms to the extent possible. When possible, please continue conducting study visits and assessments virtually. We recognize that some studies require in-person study assessments and procedures (imaging, blood draws, physical exams, etc.) that need to be re-started. We will allow an incremental increase in the recruitment of new study participants in a manner that attempts to reduce the risk of spreading infection in order to protect study and clinical staff, study participants, and others as appropriate.

1. The possibility of COVID-19 infection will still be present after resuming research operations. This is part of the "new normal." Investigators and the HRRC should re-evaluate research protocols and develop plans to manage. Studies with in-person procedures that were originally considered minimal risk (e.g., interviews, focus groups, blood draws, etc.) may need re-consideration as greater than minimal risk, due to the risk of COVID-19 infection. The risk-benefit analysis for a protocol may have shifted. The adequacy of provisions to minimize risk, to monitor safety, and to protect privacy and confidentiality may need to be re-evaluated. It may no longer be feasible to resume certain research as originally proposed and approved due to facility shut-downs, supply shortages, furloughs, etc.

2. Please continue the non-contact screening protocol prior to all in-person research visits to assess for active symptoms of acute respiratory infection possibly related to COVID-19. This may be accomplished by communication with participants, care providers, screening surveys, or other options. Participants should be screened for COVID symptoms in UNM Hospital prior to entering any other areas on campus. They may also be screened prior to entrance to the building and family members may not be allowed to accompany the participant to the visit. If family members are required participants in in-person study activities (e.g., pediatric studies), they must also be screened as above.
3. If in-person visits are required and a suitable location for the visits and activities is available, continue to reduce exposure risk by including some of the following steps:
 - a. Social distancing (6')
 - b. Reducing the number of people in an exam room to no greater than 2 at a time
 - c. Include a barrier between research personnel and participants
 - d. Minimize the number of staff who have "hands on" contact with study participants
 - e. Wearing personnel protective equipment (PPE) including gloves, masks and, if appropriate, gowns.
 - f. Wash your hands before and after contact with participants
 - g. Disinfect surfaces and equipment in the location of the visit before and after each participant visit with recommended products. Consult the [EPA List N for approved disinfectants](#) against SARS-CoV-2.
 - h. If research will involve clinical areas, all regulations about the use of clinical space must be followed and study staff must coordinate visits with these areas prior to scheduling the in-person study visit and associated clinical activities.
4. Studies that conduct quality assurance monitoring of their own or participating sites should consider how to adapt monitoring procedures to occur remotely. Possibilities might include: email, conference calls, video conferencing and approved secure platforms for exchange of files and data. Any reduction in the nature or frequency of HRRC-approved monitoring procedures should be approved in advance by the HRRC. Outside monitors are still prohibited from coming on-campus at this time.
5. Please note that some study sponsors will not approve reinitiation of study visits and recruitment, and some hospital services will not yet be available for research use.

We understand what a difficult time this has been for all, and the importance of the research that is conducted at UNMHSC. We are working hard to identify and address challenges to the conduct of research while protecting our patients, faculty and staff. Thank you for your cooperation and support.

Community Based Research Work:

For personnel engaged in community-based research (research outside of the UNM Campus), personnel will continue to conduct research through the use of electronic methods- Zoom, phone calls, emails- to mitigate the chance of cross contamination between communities. **Travel to areas**

or communities who have not met the public health guidelines for reopening in New Mexico will not be permitted (there is more guidance on this issue to come). Essential, on-campus activities will be minimized to the extent possible while still advancing research efforts.

When in-person visits are necessary **and** a location is available that meets the public health guidelines for reopening in New Mexico, continue to reduce exposure risk by including some of the following steps:

- a. Wear a cloth mask at all times
- b. Maintain physical distancing (6')
- c. Reducing the number of people in a room to no greater than 3 at a time
- d. Minimize the number of staff who have "hands on" contact with study participants
- e. Wash your hands before and after contact with participants

Sources

[CDC Infection Control and Disinfection Guidelines](#)

[CDC Cloth Mask Guidance](#)

[EPA Registry of COVID-19 Disinfectants](#)

[CDC Guideline for Disinfection and Sterilization in Healthcare Facilities](#)

Please note that [the University of New Mexico also has a webpage](#) that is updated frequently if you have specific questions regarding the University's response to the ongoing situation.

The Health Sciences Center Office of Research website contains information on specific research-related updates (including the Research Continuity Guidelines for both [Laboratories & Research Facilities](#) and [Clinical Trial Research Faculty & Staff](#)) and can be [accessed here](#).



Richard Larson, MD, PhD,
Executive Vice Chancellor
Vice Chancellor for Research

To ensure that you have the most current information, the recommendation is that information is not

printed out and that websites are accessed routinely and, as needed, to obtain updated, real-time information.