

## **Return to Work Policies and Procedures for KBS Research buildings (Approved 7.7.20)**

This protocol has been developed to enable employees who work in the research buildings at the MSU Kellogg Biological Station to conduct research while there is still a risk of contracting the virus causing COVID-19 from co-workers. This protocol was prepared by an ad-hoc KBS Building Committee comprised of Andy Fogiel (Operations & Safety Coordinator), Andy Widner (Asst. Director for Finance and Operations), Jeff Conner (Faculty and former Interim Director), Brad Osborn (Physical Plant Manager), Nate Stonerock (Custodial Lead) with input from incoming KBS Director Fredric Janzen and all current KBS employees; it is subject to immediate change or reversal as conditions warrant. Consequently, please initially consider emphasizing short-term studies that can be completed or terminated quickly (see section V1c).

First and foremost, activities in all KBS research laboratories are limited to those that can only be done at KBS: if your work can be done at home, stay at home. Individuals have a right to stay home to work, or leave work when they are at particular risk of infecting others with COVID-19, without concern for negative repercussions. MSU prohibits coercion of students and other vulnerable groups to come on-site to any KBS facility or property in order to maintain their assistantship or postdoctoral research associate support. Undergraduate students should not be in the lab unless they are paid employees who are performing a critical function of the research.

### **I. The guiding principles of these Policies and Procedures include the following:**

1. The risk of going back to work in the lab with other colleagues includes contracting the virus causing COVID-19 from another contagious person in the air or less likely from contaminated surfaces ([CDC](#)). **A contagious person may not have symptoms.**
2. If it can be done remotely, it should be; only come in to work for essential work activities that can only be done at KBS, and only if they can be done safely.
3. People will not be required to come to KBS if they are not comfortable doing so, with no repercussions.
4. Only stay at KBS for the time needed; when essential activities are done, please leave.
5. Frequent handwashing, 6 feet minimum physical distancing, masking in common areas, and health screening forms are always required.
6. The highest risk of infection occurs when people share indoor space for more than a few minutes, so when possible, one person at a time per room, one person per day preferred (see Section V2 for safe practices).
7. Always sanitize shared surfaces or equipment touched before and after use.
8. Reactivation will be gradual, so that unforeseen problems can be addressed quickly.
9. At no time is COVID-19 research conducted at any KBS facility.
10. These precautions are added to existing lab safety protocols but do not replace them.
11. Three levels of training on new policies and procedures are required for all those returning to work: EHS [online](#), the Building Plan (this document), and the Individual Lab Plan (details below). Building access may not be granted until training has been documented. Everyone must acknowledge reading this document, which will also be explained by the Director and the building committee during a virtual town hall meeting before researchers can return to work. Attendance at the town hall meeting and acknowledgement of this document will be documented for each person.

12. These guidelines will remain binding until the MSU Office of Regulatory Affairs (ORA) or the Office of the Senior Vice President for Research and Innovation (OSVPRI) allow for or require modifications. Changes to this protocol will be widely distributed to all building occupants and their supervisors by email, postings will be made at the entrances of the building, and on the KBS website.

## II. Building Preparation and access:

1. **Building Preparation:** The building has remained operational during the shutdown, equipment and all lab spaces have been monitored daily, and repairs have been performed as needed by essential personnel and contractors. This included all building HVAC and water systems, fume hoods, biosafety cabinets, eyewash stations, and autoclaves. KBS Physical Plant has increased the amount of HVAC fresh air intake so that air is fully exchanged in labs and offices at least every 7 minutes. A spreadsheet template is available in assisting the ramp up of the building as well as a ramp down should this become necessary because of a resurgence of infections or an absence of necessary PPE.
2. **Building Access:** Buildings will remain locked and access will be limited to only those faculty, staff and students who have been trained in and acknowledge the policies and procedures in this document. Per Executive Order 2020-97, general entry/exit is limited to the three entrances with glass doors: first and third floor Academic Building and first floor Stack Building. The Academic Building ramp and loading dock doors are limited to deliveries, outside vendors, and loading/unloading field supplies and samples. Unpaid undergraduate students and non-essential visiting scholars cannot enter the building.
3. **Access monitoring:** Access and presence in the building will be monitored using an online self-check in system available via a [Qualtrics form](#) that documents personnel name, lab association (PI) and automatically logs time in and out in a Google doc that can be viewed by the Director and the PIs. It also has a required checkmark acknowledging this document and that the health screening form has been completed. Access can also be traced by performing door audits as all employees are required to enter a PIN or use a fob to enter the building and all research labs. Access may be revoked by the Director for anyone found in violation of policies and procedures.
4. **Deliveries:** Deliveries will be received by assigned personnel during business hours and delivered to the appropriate locations and properly stored. Instructions for delivery personnel (USPS, UPS, FedEx etc.) are posted on each door including a phone number under which the assigned personnel can be reached to receive shipments.
5. **External Contractors and Vendor Repair Personnel:** External contractors and vendor repair personnel need to follow the building safety plan described in this document. MSU approved outside contractors will be met by KBS personnel upon appointment by phone or email at a building entrance door, instructed about the basic protocol of hand sanitizing and wearing masks, etc. and provided with a mask as necessary. KBS personnel will accompany outside contractors to their designated work area. The work area will be cleared of lab personnel to maintain social distancing of 6 feet.

## III. Required building safety practices:

The protection of employees begins at the entrances to the building:

1. KBS will continue to require employees use the [CANR online health screening survey](#) daily before physically reporting to work; paper copies are available if needed.

2. Frequent hand washing and avoiding touching one's face is recommended by the US Center for Disease Control ([CDC](#)) to avoid infection and MSU follows these recommendations. All entrances of the building will have a station with hand sanitizer. Hands must be cleaned upon entering the building using this sanitizer and washed first thing when entering the lab space using soap and water for 20 seconds. Hands should be washed at regular intervals during the work period to minimize the potential infection.
3. Wear masks that cover your mouth and nose when entering and moving about the building, only removing them if you are alone in a room with the door shut for an extended period ([CDC](#)). Masks will be provided if needed. Building airflow is set to completely exchange laboratory air at least every 7 minutes, so masks are not needed to protect from a previous occupant. This airflow will be compromised by open windows, so windows must remain closed at all times.
4. Since most virus infections are from extended close personal contact, **awareness is key:**
  - a. Maintain physical distances of 6 feet or more at all times
  - b. One person per room with the door closed whenever possible; masks must be worn in any currently shared indoor space.
  - c. One person per vehicle.
5. Leave most personal items at home – transport only essential items between work and home (e.g., water, key card, wallet, phone). Make sure you have all your belongings in a bag that you can wear on your shoulder so hands are free for sanitizing upon entry.
6. Avoid bringing your computer to work. Similarly, if your computer is already at work, avoid bringing it home. If you need to bring it, disinfect it. Similarly, disinfect a shared computer in the lab before and after use by wiping it down with a 70% ethanol solution.
7. Eating should occur outside the building whenever possible. Picnic tables are available; maintain 6 feet social distancing always.
8. During inclement weather and only if necessary, food may be consumed in individual office spaces or in the Terrace or 237 Stack rooms. One person per table, disinfect all surfaces touched when finished.
9. Drinking fountains are closed; the only source of drinking water are the two touchless bottle filling stations on each floor of the Stack building.
10. Should someone in your research group have symptoms or test positive for COVID-19 immediately notify the [KBS Director](#) (who will maintain a local record of positive cases), [University Physician](#), and [EHS](#). The laboratory will need to be properly cleaned and disinfected. Personnel who are show symptoms of illness are required to stay at home.

#### IV. Training and sanitization

1. All personnel are required to complete three levels of training before returning to work:
  - a. A Zoom training session on **Return to Work Policies and Procedures for KBS**. Representatives of the ad-hoc Building Committee will provide training and information on the procedures described in this document.
  - b. Online [COVID-19 Safe Return to Laboratory Work training](https://bit.ly/EHS-4950-SCO) from EHS (<https://bit.ly/EHS-4950-SCO>).
  - c. **Lab-specific training** by their supervisor or PI that covers the Laboratory Plan for a Safe Return for their laboratory.
  - d. Attendance at training sessions will be recorded and personnel will need to confirm attendance each time they sign in/out using a [Qualtrics form](#).

2. All common non-research spaces such as entrances, hallways, and stairwells will be sanitized 2X per workday by KBS Custodial and Facilities staff using an EPA-approved disinfectant that does not contain ammonia or ammonium (due to nitrogen analyses conducted in the Academic building). Each sanitization will be recorded in a log. All common touch surfaces will be disinfected, including doorknobs and breaker bars, stairwell handrails, elevator buttons, and light switches.
3. Custodial staff will not routinely enter research spaces, so sanitization of labs is the responsibility of users. All shared touch surfaces should be sanitized at the beginning of the day and after each use with provided wipes and 70% ethanol, including countertops and equipment handles and buttons; each round of sanitization should be recorded in a log maintained in each room. Having separate workspaces, equipment, and supplies designated for each worker is strongly preferred whenever possible.

## **V. Laboratory Practices**

### **1. Minimize time in the building:**

- a. Anything that can be done at home, should be done at home.
- b. Only go to the building if you are doing work that **MUST** be done at the laboratory.
- c. Start slowly by sowing plants, initiating cultures, processing samples you had to store, getting samples ready to be analyzed, etc.
- d. If you finish your tasks before the end of the shift—go home.
- e. If your task for the day is minor, ask a colleague who needs to go to the building to complete the task for you (be reasonable). Conversely, be good teammates and help each other out by completing simple tasks for others so they don't have to come in.
- f. Have a clear plan for the day and write up protocols for the day's work before coming to the building—only be in the building to execute the task.
- g. If you bring notes, protocols or other paper items from home leave them in the lab if possible—minimize what you bring to and from the lab.
- h. As much as you can, put all data in the cloud for accessing later at home.
- i. Don't spend time socializing in the building.

### **2. Work practices:**

- a. Social distancing requires that we limit the number of people working in individual laboratories and common spaces; 1 person per room whenever possible; 6 feet minimum physical distancing and masks worn if not.
- b. If you work by yourself, you must follow the [MSU Work Alone Policy](#). Make sure somebody knows when you arrive and leave. Use a buddy system.
- c. Each PI is responsible for setting up a weekly on-line schedule where people sign up to work in specific lab spaces during specific days or shifts. The web-based general attendance log for the building will also serve as an attendance log for the lab.
- d. Minimize travel within the building – try to stay in your lab space as much as possible. If necessary to use other than stairwells, only one person per elevator.
- e. Frequently wash your hands with soap and warm water for 20 seconds, using lab sinks for handwashing except after using the restroom. Always wash hands after

restroom use and open the restroom door with a paper towel. Note that only 1 person is allowed in a restroom at a time.

- f. Avoid touching your face.
- g. Always wear a mask in labs and public areas of the building such as hallways, stairwells, elevators, shared equipment rooms (e.g., autoclave, growth chambers, freezers). Take your mask home with you.
- h. Leave mask on when using all equipment, including microscopes.
- i. At the beginning of the day and after each use, sanitize all shared surfaces and objects touched using 70% ethanol, including doorknobs, light switches, faucets, pens, pencils, pipettors, and shared equipment. Note that sanitization is not a replacement for frequent hand washing!
- j. At the end of the workday, trash bags that need to be emptied should be tied off and placed in the hallway for safe removal by custodial staff.
- k. No in-person meetings; conference rooms will remain closed. Use Zoom or Teams instead.

#### Shared Equipment Rooms

Autoclave	342 Acad-Stack	Occasional sample and material sterilization
Ethanol Storage	113 Acad-Stack	Storage and occasional retrieval of ethanol
Walk-in Cooler 1	106 Acad-Stack	Once daily for water sample storage or liquid N
Walk-in Cooler 2	118 Acad-Stack	Once daily for water sample storage or ice
Cold Storage	103 Acad-Stack	Occasional sample storage and retrieval
Growth Chamber	343 Acad-Stack	Once daily to monitor organism growth
Sample Processing	332 Acad-Stack	Once daily to sort sample material
MEG Lab	243/245 Acad-Stack	One person/day for DNA extraction/amplification
Drying Oven	107 PEFL	At most once daily for drying plant material

#### **VI. Compliance and Compliance Monitoring:**

1. Questions about this document should be directed to the KBS Director at [kbsdiretor@msu.edu](mailto:kbsdiretor@msu.edu).
2. The Director and the PIs are responsible for compliance with the rules in this document. However, we are all in this together and need to work together. If you see non-compliance, say something to the person. If you cannot resolve the issue or the situation is unclear, talk to your supervisor or the KBS Director. Developing and maintaining a Safety Culture is everyone's responsibility. If you see unsafe work practices, please say something. You can report unsafe work practices to any of the following:
  - Your immediate supervisor or their supervisor:
    - Principal Investigator
    - KBS Director
    - Dean
  - Environmental Health and Safety at [ehs.msu.edu](http://ehs.msu.edu) or (517) 355-0153
  - MSU Misconduct Hotline- anonymous reports can be made through an online form or by calling (800) 763-0764