

2023 Cal-IPC Symposium Discussion Group #5 Notes

Considering field safety through an equity lens

This Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) workshop will focus on field safety for those who may be at higher risk for harassment or danger because of their identity/identities when doing research or other work in the field. We will facilitate collaborative discussion with participants to brainstorm ways to improve field safety protocols and strategies for minimizing risk for themselves, their colleagues, and/or their organizations.

NOTES:

- Issues can arise when there is a lack of leadership. Who has the authority to call breaks or to call out inappropriate actions?
- Set designated breaks and temperature, weather, or air quality thresholds for group breaks or stop work thresholds in advance of beginning field work.
 - Consider a pre-trip meeting with your team to set a culture of shared expectations.
- Value your own health.
- Give tools to crews and check in with them in advance on limits and expectations – air quality, heat, weather should be considered before they go into the field.
- Share language for new staff to recognize their needs and communicate with the team.
- Celebrate safety over productivity.
- Take action safely and decisively. The person with a shovel has authority to define safety for themselves.
 - Fire response safety parameters are publicly available and can be a good template or starting point.
- Recognize diversity of perspectives – what is perceived as a “threat” to one person won’t register to another, BUT that threat should be recognized. Field safety includes mental health as well as physical health
- The value of self-sufficiency in fieldwork groups can be at odds with the ability to admit that we feel threatened.
- It can be useful to hire outside agencies to get expertise on these issues
 - OSHA 10 or other guidelines
 - Sometimes free resources are available from the city/county
 - Training can often include up front costs, but agencies save money in the long term because they are less likely to lose staff and drain resources.
 - Chose training contractors wisely. Get input/collaboration from your team on their needs to get the “right” expert for your staff and your organization.
 - Bystander training is being offered by Western Section, Nov. 2, \$10 general, \$5 Student/Early career – <https://user.tws-west.org/>
 - Basic wilderness/CPR training can help folks recognize the signs of trouble.
- Help people grow into and learn good practices – soft skills training, language skills, implicit bias training, conflict resolution, etc.

Potential Action Items to consider:

- Host some training sessions.
- Share good strategies.
- Spread ideas – fixate on what works (and not what’s wrong.)
- Consider creating or joining a team of “diversity change agents” in your organization.
- Appoint a safety point person.
- Make sure your team has a clear knowledge of who to report to when issues arise – and who to report to when there is an issue with the team leader or supervisor.

- Set a timer or schedule for breaks, so that you can “blame the clock” instead of waiting until a person asks for a break.
- Give the person working with a shovel the authority to set their own comfort.
- Read! Share!

Recommended Reading:

- [“Safe fieldwork strategies for at-risk individuals, their supervisors and institutions”](#)
- [In the Field \(carleton.edu\)](#)
- [Leadership is Language: The Hidden Power of What You Say — And What You Don’t](#) by L. David Marquet could be good further reading on how to communicate.
- **“Safe fieldwork strategies for at-risk individuals, their supervisors and institutions” by Amelia-Juliette Claire Demery and Monique Avery Pipkin** <https://tinyurl.com/safe-fieldwork-strategies>
As a result of identity prejudice, certain individuals are more vulnerable to conflict and violence when they are in the field. It is paramount that all fieldworkers be informed of the risks some colleagues may face, so that they can define best practice together. Authors recommend strategies to minimize risk for all individuals conducting fieldwork.
- **“Toilet stops in the field: An educational primer and recommended best practices for field-based teaching” by Sarah Greene, Kate Ashley, Emma Dunne, Kirsty Edgar, Sam Giles, Emma Hanson, University of Birmingham Earth Sciences Department**
<https://tinyurl.com/toilet-stops>
Many institutions do not have guidelines surrounding toilet stops on field trips, and the topic is rarely discussed. This document is intended to educate staff and students about toilet stops and menstruation in the field, and contains a set of recommendations for field work and field trips with the aim of minimizing stress and anxiety for all parties.
- **“The Harassment Problem in Scientific Dream Jobs” by Sarah Scoles**
<https://www.outsideonline.com/culture/opinion/harassment-problem-scientific-dream-jobs/>
Overview of the issue regarding harassment and safety in field research, including highlights of people and groups working to change the culture.
- **“Birding While Black” by J. Drew Lanham**
<https://lithub.com/birding-while-black/>
- On race, belonging, and a love of nature. [The Home Place: Memoirs of a Colored Man’s Love Affair With Nature](#) by J. Drew Lanham
- **“California Law Prohibits Workplace Discrimination and Harassment” by CA Civil Rights Department**
<https://tinyurl.com/ca-workplace-law>
CA law prohibits harassment of employees, applicants, unpaid interns, volunteers, and independent contractors by any person.