UTIA COVID-19 Guidelines and Procedures
Updated March 13, 2020

The latest updates are highlighted.

UTIA is committed to taking all reasonable steps to minimize exposure and reduce the risk of transmission of the coronavirus through social distancing, personal hygiene, and effective workforce strategies. With this in mind, we are adopting the following procedures to guide us in the coming months. These procedures and guidelines are to be implemented no later than March 16, 2020.

CLASSES

Didactic classes for both the Herbert College of Agriculture and the College of Veterinary (CVM) Medicine will be converted to online delivery beginning March 23. Provisions for online instruction will be made for all faculty and students. Fourth year students in CVM will remain fully engaged on campus to complete their education. Creative approaches to fulfilling laboratory and experiential learning will be developed.

TRAVEL

Effective March 9, we have implemented a restriction on non-essential domestic and international travel. We are encouraging everyone to identify alternative approaches to travel out of state, especially online engagement. With many universities announcing similar travel restrictions, it is likely that out-of-state meetings, events, and conferences will be cancelled, rescheduled or offered in a different format.

Travel which may be deemed as essential could include travel that is absolutely necessary to preserve the safety of students, faculty and staff, the safety of a research subject, or a research, education or Extension activity that cannot be postponed without causing serious harm or consequences. Requests for exceptions will be handled on a case-by-case basis by our senior leadership team. Employees in counties that border another state are authorized to travel up to 50 miles across the state line without out-of-state approval.

Employees must self-isolate for 14 days if they return from travel out of the country, or a cruise, or if they exhibit symptoms of COVID-19 infection; additionally, we recommend that all UTIA employees and students self-isolate if they travel more than 50 miles beyond the Tennessee border (CVM employees and students are required to do so). Details should be worked out with
direct supervisors who will consider working remotely and/or leave, or other approaches to cover the absence from the office. If telecommuting is not possible, paid administrative leave will be available, limited to the employee’s regular wages without overtime.

MEETINGS

We strongly encourage all meetings, events, and activities organized by UTIA which are open to the public to be conducted using distance technology or rescheduled. Meetings of faculty and staff will continue, and should also be conducted using online media whenever possible. Face-to-face meetings should be conducted following recommendations for social interactions which can be found on our website at utia.tennessee.edu/coronavirus.

FACILITIES

UTIA facilities will remain open and continue to serve clients. County Extension offices and 4-H Centers will remain open, unless county governments announce a closure due to COVID-19. Research and Education Centers will remain open and research work will continue. External groups will not be penalized if they cancel or reschedule their meetings or events. Extra care will be devoted to cleaning and sanitizing facilities and providing hand sanitizing material at all locations.

DAILY OPERATIONS

It is critical that any employee who is sick remain at home. Any student or employee who tests positive for COVID19 must contact the university immediately.

Employees may be eligible for two weeks of paid administrative leave if circumstances require them to be away from work, such as child care due to school closures, elder care responsibilities, or serious chronic medical conditions that place them at high risk. These employees must seek approval for administrative leave from their supervisor.

To help minimize exposure at work, supervisors are asked to work with all employees to identify remote working opportunities, flexible scheduling, or other creative approaches to to reduce the risk of exposure while ensuring that critical responsibilities are carried out. Employees scheduled to attend external meetings or events should discuss their participation with their direct supervisor and make an informed decision about participation.

Student and other part-time hourly workers should be provided opportunities for continued employment at their current appointment levels. These tasks may need to differ from their normal duties based on their location and operational needs. Our goal is to continue to provide productive employment and earnings to these workers so that they are not disadvantaged by this outbreak. Student and temporary workers are not eligible for paid administrative leave. Student and temporary workers who decline alternate work assignments will be unpaid until their normal responsibilities resume.
Costs associated with travel cancellations, meetings rescheduled, hourly worker pay, and added facilities expenses will be tracked by each department, center, or office.

**RESEARCH**

Research projects will continue. In the unlikely event of the closure of a research facility, plans should be developed to provide ongoing care for animals and plants. Arrangements may also be needed to accommodate student-led research projects to ensure progression towards degree completion. Laboratory managers must recognize that there may be fewer individuals in each facility, and it is unsafe for any individuals to work alone in laboratory settings.