Field Crop Research - Guidance on the Use of Multiple Person Equipment & Physical Distancing

We understand and support the need for researchers who are going to work in field crop research in support of the agriculture and food sectors to protect themselves from COVID-19.

Reminder for all personnel:

- If you are ill/have symptoms or have been exposed to COVID-19 do not come to campus/work, inform your supervisor, take the Ontario COVID-19 self-assessment [1] and follow the directions given. Also complete and submit the University Employee Self Declaration Form [2]. For a complete list of COVID-19 related symptoms, refer to the Ministry of Health’s COVID-19 Reference Document for Symptoms [3].
- If you have tested positive for COVID-19 or have COVID-19 related inquiries, call the U of G Call Centre at 519-824-4120 ext. 53906. The call centre will guide you through the reporting process and will connect you with supports from Student Health Services or occupational Health and Wellness.
- Strict hygiene measures, including frequent hand washing and physical (social) distancing (at least 2-metre separation between yourself and other people) will reduce your chance of being exposed to the virus; and,
- When worn properly, a person wearing a mask can reduce the spread of his or her own infectious respiratory droplets. Non-medical masks do not provide complete protection against viral particles because of a potential loose fit and the materials used.

Environmental Health & Safety (EHS) in consultation with the Office of Research have determined the following:

1. If your job requires extended periods of time on multiple-person equipment, the Research Station Manager will work with the EHS-Manager of Agricultural & Veterinary Safety and research program leads (Principle Investigators, Lead Technicians) to determine whether modifications to multi-person equipment is possible to achieve the required physical distancing, such as single person use or the addition of barriers.
2. Where it has been determined that physical distancing is not practical, safe or pragmatic, a medical mask [4] must be worn and use of eye protection (e.g., face shield or goggles) should be considered in accordance with the Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) guideline "COVID-19: Working in Close Contact (less than 2 metres of others)" [5]. For individuals who are able to maintain physical distancing from others, a disposable or reusable non-medical mask [6] is still acceptable. Public health agencies continue to recognize well-fitting, properly worn 2- and 3-ply non-medical masks as an effective source control and protection from COVID-19 and its variants.
3. The use of a N95 respirator (instead of a non-medical mask) must be limited and should only be considered if the respirator is required to carry out the job safely by reducing exposure to airborne contaminants (other than COVID-19), such as field dust and treated seed. You may wear the N95 respirator if it is warranted by the task in question, as previously determined by EHS.
4. An option may exist to wear a half facemask elastomeric respirator with particulate filters for those whose tasks require them to use such respiratory protection for the hazards in their work, as previously determined by EHS.

In a ‘normal’ year, the Research Stations would supply PPE for their staff at these locations; and researchers would supply their own, either purchased from external suppliers or from the University of Guelph Stockroom. If your role at the field crop research station has been identified as requiring PPE for non-COVID-19 reasons, it is expected that you will have already sourced the required equipment in anticipation of starting research. If this is not the case or you have identified new users for PPE for non-COVID-19 reasons and acquiring any required PPE is a problem, please advise the EHS-Manager of Agricultural & Veterinary Safety and/or EHS-Occupational Hygienist.

The EHS Manager, Agricultural & Veterinary Safety, M. Christi Cooper may be contacted by email at mcooper@uoguelph.ca [7] by phone at 519-824-4120 ext. 52049.

The EHS Occupational Hygienist, Bryan Lee may be contacted by email at bryanlee@uoguelph.ca [8] or by phone
at 519-824-4120 ext. 54855.

Updated on June 28, 2021.

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[6] https://www.uoguelph.ca/hr/about-hr/environmental-health-safety-ehs/ehs-programs-policies-guidelines-and-forms/ehs-0
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