TEXAS STATE
FORENSIC ANTHROPOLOGY CENTER

Standard Operating Procedure

Research at FACTS Facilities During COVID-19 Pandemic

A. General Information

Department	Anthropology
Center	Forensic Anthropology Center at Texas State (FACTS)
Laboratory Manager	Dr. Daniel Wescott
Laboratory Manager Contact Information	dwescott@txstate.edu, 512-245-1945 (office), 512-557-5398 (cell)
Laboratory Safety Contact	Dr. Timothy Gocha, 512-245-1900 (office), 614-832-3266 (cell)
Laboratory Phone	512-245-1900
Buildings	Grady Early Building; Multipurpose Complex
Lab Room Numbers	GEB 124, MPC
Emergency Contact	Dr. Daniel Wescott
Secondary Contact	Dr. Timothy Gocha
Date SOP written	June 2, 2020
Date SOP Approved by PI	June 8, 2020

Principle, Spirit, and Intent: Protect the health and safety (both emotional and physical) of FACTS personnel and students and prevent the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus and the resulting coronavirus disease (COVID-19) during the ongoing pandemic.

Purpose and Scope: This Laboratory COVID-19 Response SOP (LCR-SOP) outlines the procedures and guidelines for conducting research at FACTS laboratories during the COVID-19 pandemic. This LCR-SOP applies to all FACTS personnel who have access to laboratories (GEFARL, FARF, ORPL), collections, and data files covered by the SOP. In the absence of specific procedures or in the case of conflicting procedures, the principle, spirt, and intent will be met.

General: Research is an important component of the Texas State University and FACTS missions. Research is linked to student and faculty academic success, so it is important to conduct laboratory-based research. This LCR-SOP is a supplemental document to state, local, university and department policies and guidelines. The resumption of laboratory-based research will occur in alignment with university standard operating procedures, policies, timelines, and scenarios. These COVID-19 policies and procedures are additive with existing policies and safety training related to research at FACTS.

Spread of COVID-19: Understanding how COVID-19 spreads is important for understanding the reasons behind and the importance of the modified laboratory procedures during the pandemic. According to the CDC, the virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person:

- Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet)
- Through respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks
- These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs
- COVID-19 may be spread by people who are not showing symptoms

University Research Laboratory Phases:

- Phase 0: Restricted Access to Laboratories: All laboratories closed, except for personnel required to protect life safety and critical research infrastructure/capabilities
    - Minimum staffing - <25%
    - Brief wellness checks
    - Completion of experiments within a short time-frame
    - No new projects initiated
    - No ongoing data collection
    - Research Exemptions: Researchers may request an exemption to conduct laboratory-based research through the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs by submitting request for designation of an essential activity in a university research laboratory to Dr. Michael Blanda.
- Phase 1: Limited Access to Laboratories
    - All research that can be done remotely should continue to be done remotely
    - Participation in research is voluntary
    - No more then 25% capacity at any laboratory
    - Field data collection at FARF allowed with proper social distancing and PPE use
    - Prioritize graduate students and postdocs close to completing their degree/term of appointment
    - Prioritize research for completion of grants, contracts, and time-sensitive research
- Phase 2: Phase Access to Laboratories
    - Initiated in accordance with best scientific and medical information
    - Phased increase in staffing and more routine data collection

B. Definitions and Key Concepts

Laboratories: The Forensic Anthropology Center at Texas State (FACTS) operates three research laboratories. These include the Grady Early Forensic Anthropology Laboratory (GEFARL), room 124 of the Grady Early Building (GEB), the Osteological Research and Processing Laboratory (ORPL) at the Multipurpose Complex on Freeman Ranch, and the outdoor Forensic Anthropology Research Facility (FARF) on Freeman Ranch.

Personnel: Includes any person who enters a FACTS laboratory including, but not limited to faculty, staff, students, external researchers, contractors, and service providers.

Cleaning removes germs, dirt, and impurities from surfaces and objects. Cleaning works by using soap and water to physically remove germs from surfaces. This process does not

necessarily kill germs, but by removing them, it lowers their numbers and the risk of spreading infection.

Disinfecting works by using chemicals to kill germs on surfaces or objects. This process does not necessarily clean dirty surfaces or remove germs, but by killing germs on a surface after cleaning, it can further lower the risk of spreading infection.

Sanitizing lowers the number of germs on surfaces or objects to a safe level, as judged by public health standards and requirements. This process works by either cleaning or disinfecting surfaces or objects to lower the risk of spreading infection.

C. Roles and Responsibilities

Director, Associate Director, and Coordinator are responsible for working in conjunction to

- Train personnel and implement the policies and procedures within the LCR-SOP
- Maintain the facility to comply with the LCR-SOP
- Provide a sanitation station with sufficient supplies of required items for the personnel within the laboratory
- Provide personal protective equipment required for the lab personnel
- Create a system for monitoring and controlling access to the laboratory to ensure compliance with maximum lab occupancy based on square footage of the lab space and for communicating with lab personnel
- Keep a log of everyone in and out of the lab in case contact tracing is necessary
- Perform a review of LCR-SOP compliance a regular intervals and reporting safety of facilities and personnel

Lab Personnel are responsible for the following

- Closely monitoring their health and not entering a FACTS laboratory if developing or displaying symptoms of COVID-19 or if exposed to high risk situations such as caring for others with COVID-19 or traveling to sites with high incidences
- Monitoring their temperature and not entering laboratories if their temperature increases precipitously or it exceeds 100 degrees Fahrenheit without the use of fever reducing medications
- Monitor for combinations of other COVID symptoms such as cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, muscle or body aches, headaches, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, new confusion, inability to stay awake, blush lips or face
- Complying with the LCR-SOP policies and procedures and other risk mitigation practices outlined by this LCR-SOP
- Sanitizing work surfaces at the beginning and end of their work
- Social distancing and making sure no more than seven people are in the lab
- Correctly wearing, using, and disposing PPE and correctly hand washing frequently

Laboratory Administrative Head: The FACTS Director, Dr. Daniel Wescott is responsible for the oversight of the laboratories and is responsible for the following:

- Reviewing and approving the LCR-SOP, and
- Reviewing LCR-SOP compliance at regular intervals of twice per month.

D. Environmental and Facilities

D1. Disinfecting and Sanitizing Work Areas:

- When possible, use a work area/station that will not be used by others during this time
- If you use a shared work area or equipment (e.g., calipers, CT computer), you must disinfect the work area and/or equipment prior to use and when you are done using it each day.
- Personal objects (phones, backpacks, laptops, tablets, etc.) brought into the lab must be kept at the work area. Items that will be exposed to facility air must be sanitized prior to bringing them into a laboratory. Items that can be kept on your person (phones, keys, etc.) do not need to be disinfected but must taken out.
- FACTS has several disinfectant options available so be careful to follow the prescribed disinfectant instructions of each (see below)

Disinfectant Products Available in FACTS Facilities		
Product	*For Use On*	*Disinfectant Instructions*
Lysol Disinfecting Wipes	Any hard surface. Ideal for electronics	Allow surface to remain wet for 4 minutes after wiping. Allow surface to air dry. Discard used wipe.
Lysol All Purpose Spray Cleaner	Any hard surface. May be used on electronics	After spraying, leave surface wet for 2 minutes before wiping with clean rag
Envirocide	Any hard, non-porous surface	After spraying, leave surface wet for 3 minutes before wiping with clean rag
Cavicide	Any hard, non-porous surface	After spraying, leave surface wet for 3 minutes before wiping with clean rag.
10% Bleach	Non-metalic surfaces	After spraying, leave surface wet for 2 minutes before wiping with clean rag.
Note: 10% bleach is only effective as a disinfectant for 24 hours after being mixed. FACTS has gallons of bleach and spray bottles in which 10% bleach can be made daily if necessary		

- In the event that adequate supplies are not available, the lab user shall not proceed to use the laboratory and must notify the Director, Associate Director, or Coordinator

- A list of disinfectants for use against the SARS-CoV-2 virus is available from the EPA on their website: https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2
- Common use surfaces (e.g., door handles) should be disinfected daily

D2. Scheduled/Work-Shift Access and Density Limits

- Access to FACTS laboratories (GEFARL, FARF, and ORPL) is restricted to authorized individuals only. Non-essential, controlled visitors, and tours are disallowed during Phases 0 and 1
- Approval to use FACTS facilities must come from the FACTS Director, Dr. Wescott. Approvals will be prioritized for funded research and graduate students and postdocs close to completing their degree/term of appointment
- The director will work with researchers to develop a schedule that ensures low density (less than 10 individuals, < 25% capacity in GEB and 4 individuals in ORPL) and proper social distancing. This may include staggered hours.
- All personnel must swipe into the laboratory using the door card reader system. Individuals without card access must sign in using the sign in form located by the laboratory door and include their name, netID, email, date, time entered, and time left. The login sheets will be kept for the purposes of contract tracing
- Only one person at a time can use a workstation.
- Students cannot be pressured to work in laboratories. All participation in research in the laboratories is voluntary.
- Students will not be allowed to work in the GEB work area during Phases 0 and 1
- Use of the FACTS trucks is currently not permitted for any reason other than the body donation program during Phases 0 and 1.
- The Director, Associate Director, and Coordinator will monitor and ensure density limits are maintained.

Social Distancing: Social distancing should be maintained when entering, exiting, or working in the laboratories

- Maintain a distance of at least 6 feet between you and anyone else
- Avoid situation that prevent social distancing and be aware of your environment
- If maintaining proper social distance is not possible due to the task (e.g., working on a forensic case or donor placement) proper PPE should be utilized including wearing a face mask and gloves. PPE must be worn as intended. Face masks must cover both the nose and mouth.
- Face masks help protect others but are not an alternative to social distancing

E. Personal Protective Equipment and Responsibilities

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Hand Washing Protocol: Regularly washing your hands is one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of COVID-19. All personnel using FACTS facilities during the pandemic are expected to wash their hands before and after eating or drinking, after using the restroom, before touching eyes, nose or mouth, after touching common surfaces, and immediately after removing gloves or facemasks. Proper handwashing includes the following five steps:

- **Wet** your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap.
- **Lather** your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
- **Scrub** your hands for at least 20 seconds.
- **Rinse** your hands well under clean, running water.
- **Dry** your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.

Handwashing facilities are available in all restrooms at ORPL and GEB, and in the kitchen area of GEB. At FARF, alcohol-based hand sanitizer is available in the PPE shed and should be used when necessary. Proper use of hand sanitizer includes applying the product to the palm of one hand, rubbing your hands together ensuring all surfaces of your hands and fingers are covered, and continuing to rub the product in until your hands are dry – this should take approximately 20 seconds.

Personal Protective Equipment Protocol: FACTS personnel must use appropriate PPE when conducting research in the laboratories. It is required that masks be worn indoors when social distancing cannot be reliably maintained.

- Necessary PPE will be provided by FACTS personnel.
- When using common equipment that is difficult to disinfect gloves should be worn.
- When social distancing is not possible personnel should wear a face mask or face shield.
- Appropriate PPE will be provided. PPE is purchased as needed. If supplies needed to maintain proper safety are unavailable, delayed, or pending access to the laboratories may be restricted and indoor activities that prevent social distancing will be suspended until supplies are available.
- Cloth masks can be worn in the laboratory. Personnel bringing in cloth masks should wash their hands prior to putting on or taking off the mask.

Commitment to Public Health Best Practices

FACTS leadership is committed to the promotion of and adherence to public health best practices to ensure the safety of all students, staff, faculty, and associated researchers. Based upon recommendations from the CDC and OSHA, we ask that all persons using FACTS facilities adhere to the following:

- All personnel must review and sign the document "Commitment to Public Health Practices for Research Team Members" prior to being allowed to enter the laboratory. Commitment forms state and affirm each person's responsibility to maximize health and safety before being granted access to FACTS laboratories
- Frequently wash hands with soap and water
- Avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
- Practice good respiratory etiquette, including covering coughs and sneezes
- Practice proper social distancing and PPE guidelines
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick (including outside of work)
- Self-monitor for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 (e.g., fever, cough, difficulty breathing, fatigue). If you develop any symptoms, *seek medical attention* and refrain from coming to any FACTS facilities.
- Report any potential illness to FACTS leadership via phone or email.
- FACTS director will conduct contract tracing while maintaining anonymity if a person entering the laboratories test positive or develop symptoms of COVID-19 within two weeks.

F. Surveillance and Compliance

Personal Responsibilities

- All users of any FACTS laboratory must inform the Director by emailing Dr. Wescott (dwescott@txstate.edu) if they develop any COVID-19-like symptoms and follow up with medical test results ASAP.
- All users of any FACTS laboratory who are diagnosed with COVID-19 must follow university and local health procedures for notifying the lab and health officials immediately. Heath officials include University Health Services, Hays County Health Services, and primary healthcare provider
- The Director and Associate Director of FACTS will assist health officials with contract tracing by notifying all people who have had face-to-face engagement, interaction, or shared space with the COVID case within 48 hours of the person developing symptoms. Those contacted should quarantine for 14 days.

Reporting

- Reporting of compliance issues should be reported to the Director or Associate Director of FACTS. The Director will notify ORSP of compliance issues by email.

G. Communications:

Communication of Polices and Procedures

- All FACTS SOP are available at https://www.txstate.edu/anthropology/facts/labs/SOP.html

- The policies and procedures within the LCR-SOP will be communicated to all lab users by sending an electronic version of the LCR-SOP via their official Texas State email address
- Any revisions of the LCR-SOP will be communicated to all lab personnel within 24 hours prior to implementing the revised policies and procedures
- All personal offices are restricted areas.

Training and Education

- Training and education materials will be provided to lab personnel which are designed to teach appropriate hand hygiene and standard precautions, correct sequence and methods for donning and removing PPE, instruct on actions to take after an exposure, and instruct lab personnel with symptoms where and how to report to a specific screening and evaluation site
- Lab personnel must complete the training materials prior to being given access to the laboratory
- Lab personnel must sign a document stating that the above training has been completed and understood
- The Associate Director will maintain a record of the evidence of training documents by the lab personnel and users and provide this to the Director
- The following chain of communication will be used for all communication related to the LCR-SOP
    1. Associate Director
    2. Director
    3. Department Chair
    4. ORSP

H. Phase Changes

Phase 1

- The Director will inform all lab users, the Department Chair, and ORSP the date that Phase 1 is implemented

Phase 2

- The decision to advance or not to Phase 2 will be determined by ORSP
- Internal conditions and criteria (number of days without incident) will be considered to trigger advancement to Phase 2
- If and when approved to advance to Phase 2, the Director will inform all users, the Department Chair, and ORSP the date that Phase 2 is implemented

Reversion to Phase 0

- The decision to advance or not to Phase 0 will be determined by ORSP

- Internal conditions and criteria (number of days without incident) will be considered to trigger reversion to Phase 0
- External conditions (federal, state, and local edicts, university mandates) will be considered to trigger reversion to Phase 0
- If reversion to Phase 0 is instructed, the Director will inform all lab users, the Department Chair, and ORSP the date Phase 0 is implemented

Willed Body Donation Program: FACTS' Willed Body Donation Program was designated as an essential activity by Dr. Michael Blanda in March of 2020. As such, the program continues to accept donations. Under Phase 0 of the University plan, only FACTS faculty are working with the body donation program and are handling all pickup, intakes, and placement of donated remains. According to the CDC, the normal routes of coronavirus transmission (i.e., person-to-person) are not a concern when handling human remains or performing postmortem procedures. However, it may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads. Proper use of PPE (see above) is required of all persons working with the body donation program during donor pickup, intake, and placement.

Forensic Case Work: Forensic case work aiding local and state-wide medicolegal agencies is also an essential activity. As with the body donation program, this will primarily be handled by FACTS faculty during the pandemic. The greatest risk of coronavirus exposure during any aspect of casework is close person-to-person contact. When possible, proper social distancing guidelines will be followed during any casework conducted by FACTS, and proper use of PPE is expected when social distancing is not possible.