

Emergency Preparedness Planning Department of Microbiology & Immunology

It is always better to be prepared for an emergency by thinking through in advance how you will handle various situations. Just because you find yourself in a bad situation does not mean that you are helpless or must act like a victim. Preparation allows immediate action. Some situations have unambiguous responses whereas others offer a range of options in which different people might make different choices. This document is intended to prompt members of the Department of Microbiology & Immunology to think about and discuss emergency preparedness plans. Discussions occur at least annually in MCRO courses and seminars on the first day of class in each course, with a review during faculty meetings, as well as annually in every research group in greater detail.

I. Immediate Leadership Action

In the event of an emergency affecting a group of people (rather than an individual), avoid being overwhelmed by the bystander effect (e.g., do not assume someone else will deal with the situation). Someone must immediately take responsibility to lead the group in an appropriate response. If a faculty member is present, the faculty member will lead. If a faculty member is not present, then whomever oversees the gathering will lead. Everyone in our community has a responsibility to themselves and others to be prepared for emergencies.

II. Preparedness Resources

- UNC expects all classroom instructors to complete “Emergency Preparedness for Instructors (with Attestation)” training prior to the start of classes annually. Any faculty who teach classes can access this via Connect Carolina, use the link to Carolina Talent Learning within the Self-Service menu to access the training.
- Download the Carolina Ready Safety App at: <https://campussafety.unc.edu/safetyapp/>.
- Familiarize yourself with the extensive resources available at Carolina Ready (<https://campussafety.unc.edu/carolina-ready/>).
- Review the Carolina Ready poster at <https://campussafety.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/873/2020/06/carolina-ready-poster.pdf> (also attached) which is a particularly useful comprehensive quick guide to all kinds of emergencies. Consider printing and posting one in your lab or office.
- The most current version of this document will be posted on the department website under Resources.

III. General Preparedness

Alert Carolina. The Alert Carolina system activates sirens, email messages, and text messages in case of an emergency. You may not be able to hear the sirens, so be sure you are signed up for texts and emails at <https://alertcarolina.unc.edu>.

Group discussions & activities. All research groups should discuss emergency preparedness plans at least once per year. At a minimum, be sure to cover the “Initial activities” marked in **red** in each section of this document.

Exiting the building. No matter what the emergency, if you need to exit the building then do so via stairs and not elevators, unless you are physically unable to use the stairs.

- **Initial activity.** What are at least two routes to stairs/building exits from your lab/office/classroom/conference room?
- **Initial activity.** Is there someone in your group who cannot use stairs? If so, what will your plan be to get them safely out of the building?

Crowdsourcing responses. A leader must take charge, stop the group activity, and take action immediately in the case that an emergency situation emerges. After taking initial decisive steps which may be urgent or time-sensitive, the leader may ask others for suggestions to take advantage of everyone's collective knowledge for the common good, allowing each person to contribute to addressing the emergency as they are able.

9-1-1 calls. Be aware that depending upon how your cellphone call is routed, your call to 9-1-1 may be connected to Orange County or Chapel Hill or Carrboro instead of UNC. Be clear that you are calling from UNC. Emergency dispatchers in different jurisdictions know how to connect with each other. Ensure additional review of details for contacting 9-1-1 for international trainees who may not be familiar with the US emergency number/system. Hence, be sure to explain the function of 9-1-1 operators, how/when to call, and the number to call (9-1-1). *Optional:* In addition, consider downloading generic police or fire scanner apps such as *Scanner Radio* to listen in to emergency responders live if 9-1-1 operators can't be reached for any reason (such as call volume).

IV. Weather Emergencies

The most likely emergency we will face at UNC is severe weather (hurricane/tornado). The primary danger is broken/flying glass and debris. Most labs/offices/classrooms/conference rooms used by our department have windows; you need to move to an interior area of the building away from windows.

- **Initial activity.** Where will you go to shelter in place in case of a weather emergency (likely an interior hallway, stairwell, or bathroom)?

V. Fire Emergencies

A fire almost always necessitates immediately leaving the building. Make sure everyone in the group is accounted for and guide everyone to the nearest stairs. If you see a fire, activate an alarm to alert others. If the fire is just starting and you judge it safe to act, then direct most people out of the building and use a fire extinguisher. You potentially could request that other people locate and bring additional fire extinguishers. However, the first priority is safety for all.

- **Initial activity.** Everyone should find the fire extinguisher and fire alarm nearest to their lab/office/classroom/conference room on their own. People are much more likely to remember this information if they actively figure it out for themselves than if they passively hear it from someone else.

VI. Medical Emergencies

A serious medical emergency will likely involve summoning professional help and performing first aid until help arrives. Do not move the victim. Send a volunteer representative of the group outside to meet the ambulance and direct emergency personnel to the victim.

- **Initial activity.** Take an inventory of group experience. Who has training in first aid? CPR? AED? Other medical or EMT training (there may be MD/PhD students or volunteer EMTs in your group)?
- **Initial activity.** Where is the nearest Automated External Defibrillator (AED)? In most UNC buildings, it is someplace on the first floor.

VII. Active Assailant Emergencies

Prevention. Most violence occurs between people who know one another, which provides an opportunity for intervention and prevention. If you have concerns about someone's behavior, then report your concerns this may support the person in getting access to help to resolve the matter before violence occurs:

- For concerns about a student, call the Dean of Students Office at 919-966-4042 (<https://dos.unc.edu/urgent-concerns/>).
- Unsure who to contact? Use the Graduate School Student Care decision tree to help direct you to the most appropriate action and relevant resource (<https://gradschool.unc.edu/students/support/>)
- Access the Heels Care Network for access to reporting options and resources as well (<https://gradschool.unc.edu/students/support/>)
- For concerns about an employee, call Employee and Management Relations in Human Resources at 919-843-3444 (<https://hr.unc.edu/employees/emr/>).

Strategy. The recommended strategy for an Active Assailant emergency is: Run, Hide, Fight, described in more detail below.

How to Run. If you know where the threat is located, then do what you can to get away from the threat. To be ready to run, know multiple exit routes from your lab, office, classroom, or other work locations. If you do not know where the threat is, then you should Hide. After a brief delay to allow people to get to safety, UNC will like begin to remotely lock down buildings as the default first strategy. You do not want to inadvertently run toward danger or be stuck outside with an assailant.

Rationale for Hiding. A hiding strategy is informed by the following information:

- Police response time for assailants is very fast (a couple of minutes).
- Assailants typically leave the scene in 5 to 10 minutes. It takes much longer for police to be sure it is safe to sound the "All Clear".
- Violence predominantly occurs between people who know one another and not at random. Therefore, mass casualties are highly unlikely.
- Building doors will be locked remotely after a delay to allow people outside to hear sirens and get inside. If the assailant is not in the building, then they will have a hard time getting to you through locked exterior and interior doors.
- The above points all suggest the danger will diminish rapidly and significantly after the start of an event. The longer you hide, the safer you are.

How to Hide.

- If you are the senior faculty member or trainee in charge, remind the group that the safe thing to do is stay put and not leave.
- Lock and barricade any doors and windows to the classroom using whatever is available (ideally furniture). However, be aware that people outside of your room may also want to shelter there. In buildings with open lab architecture, a classroom is likely the best place to hide.
- Doors that open outward typically have a V-shaped hinge at the top as part of their self-closing mechanism. Tying a belt or clothing around the hinge on the inside when the door is in the closed position can make it difficult or impossible to open the door.
- If there are a few minutes after an alert while people are still entering the hiding room, take the opportunity to gather fire extinguishers, other heavy items, or barrier items for potential defensive.
- If there are windows through which an assailant could see into the room, then move away from those windows. If there are blinds or shades, close them even if you are on an upper floor.
- Turn off the room lights. This reduces visibility into the room also minimizing shadows of people inside the room who might otherwise be visible to an assailant from the hall.
- Ask everyone to turn the sound off on their cell phones and other electronic devices. Remind everyone to stay as calm as possible, to maximize chance of safety. *Optional:* Model deep breathing or mindfulness meditation and invite people to quietly participate with you.
- It is generally OK for people to use their phones to tell friends and family they are safe and where they are. However, it is preferable to text or email rather than use voice or video calling to avoid (i) making noise and (ii) overwhelming the cell phone network, which will be heavily used during an emergency.
- Remind everyone they should NOT post anything to social media during the lockdown, because that could reveal your location to the assailant.
- Be aware that paying too much attention to your phone has the potential to distract your attention from your surroundings. You need to be present in the moment.
- If it is clear that the shooter is elsewhere, then make and agree upon a plan for people to leave the room briefly to use the bathroom, etc. The door should be locked after people leave. Reentry could for example involve use of a code word or passing ID under the door before people inside the room will unlock the door.
- Ask how everyone is doing and if anyone has any special needs in the moment.
- Ask for suggestions of other actions that the group could take to improve their chance of survival.
- **Initial activity.** Decide where the group will hide in place if Alert Carolina warns of an active assailant. Figure out how to lock the room doors. Determine if the doors open outward or inward. Decide what you can use to barricade the doors.

How to Fight

- While hiding, assess what items are available that could be used to strengthen your defensive posture, and/or to distract, slow down, or incapacitate the assailant if it becomes necessary to fight. Make a plan to use these items identified/collected.
 - Tables can be used as barriers and barricades.
 - Fire extinguishers are readily available, can be effectively discharged at a distance from an assailant, and is briefly incapacitating if sprayed in the face, which can allow for follow-up physical action to subdue an assailant. Furthermore, because discharging a fire extinguisher is nonlethal, a user does not need to worry about a case of mistaken identity, and therefore can immediately use it against a perceived assailant without hesitation.
 - Consider using anything at hand that can be thrown at an assailant such as backpacks, books, chairs, or whatever else is available.

VIII. Personal Attack Emergencies

The UNC campus is generally a safe environment (<https://police.unc.edu/about/security-fire-safety-report/>). Crimes such as rape or aggravated assault are uncommon, but do happen. Having personal strategies to minimize risk and decide in advance how you will respond to such a situation can prevent incidents and improve outcomes. *Optional:* In addition to Carolina Ready, explore other generic campus safety apps (e.g., *Noonlight* or *Rave Guardian*) that you would be familiar enough with the apps to access them quickly if needed. Consider preemptively adding location-sharing with close friends or family (e.g., *Life360* or *iPhone location-sharing*).

- **Initial activity.** Where in your daily routine are you most vulnerable to a potential attack? When are you alone with no one around to help in case of an emergency? For many people, this will be walking to your lab at odd hours or in a parking garage. Once you have identified your vulnerable locations, you can mitigate risk substantially by being aware of your surroundings (put away your smartphone!), walking with purpose to your destination, and carrying your keys in your hand so there is no delay in entering the safety of your building or your car.
- **Initial activity.** How will you respond if confronted by an attacker? An attacker expects to be in control of the situation, but if you react immediately instead of being frozen in fear, then you can take the surprise advantage. Will you scream? Will you run? Will you throw your keys in one direction and run in another? If you cannot run, will you use mace? Will you put your keys between your fingers and stab the attacker's face? These are deeply personal risk/benefit analyses; the primary point is to think through them in advance. Do not wait to think about your options until the moment that you need to implement a response (hopefully never).

IX. Next Steps

Follow up activities will include annual checks of systems, policies, and the need for updates at the start of every Fall semester (e.g., identifying malfunctioning card locks, reviewing location of safety equipment and exit routes in class and lab). Each course director will create a customized course emergency preparedness slide, review in class, post on *Canvas* course site, and send an official departmental copy of the course slide along with their final syllabus (send to jamie_desoto@unc.edu). Every research group has made and reviewed emergency response plans relevant to the lab space, etc. – and will hold an annual emergency preparedness refresher discussion.

The safety of our community is a collective effort. Your ideas and feedback to improve our preparations are welcome. Send suggestions to Rebekah Layton (rlayton@unc.edu) for incorporation into future plans.