

Research Continuity Plans During the COVID-19 Outbreak:

Biosafety and the Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC)

Dear TTUHSC El Paso Community,

The health and safety of students, staff, and faculty remains our top priority. With this in mind, the research administrative support services provided by the Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR) will remain operational to the fullest extent possible. To protect human health and minimize the spread of the virus, nearly all OVPR staff are now working remotely. Essential *on-campus* research functions also remain operational, albeit with minimal on-site staffing. ***Those functions include biosafety in the laboratories and other approved spaces at locations throughout the campus.***

TTUHSC El Paso is committed to the safe, legal, and ethical use of hazardous chemical and biological materials in its facilities. Acting as an agent for the institution in regulating work involving such materials, the IBC shall ensure that the “Covered Work” meets all applicable safety, legal, and ethical requirements. The guidelines below are being implemented to minimize the risk of exposure to COVID-19 for all research personnel, staff and students.

- PI's should consider alternative plans for conducting research activities if staff are reduced. These activities include receipt, collection, handling, use, storage, transfer and/or disposal of biologically and chemically hazardous materials, including recombinant DNA, as well as direct interactions with/between research personnel.
- Access to the labs/approved areas will follow the same criteria that govern campus and MSB I access. During periods of restricted access, researchers and staff designated as essential on-campus personnel will be able to enter the designated areas using the keycard access system.
- New biosafety protocols that involve direct person-to-person contact, and collection of human samples, will not be approved at this time. However, other new protocols and renewals will be considered.

IBC Operations

TTUHSC El Paso IBC operations will continue uninterrupted during the outbreak. Office personnel and the Chair will continue to be available, remotely. Contingency plans are already in place to conduct convened IBC meetings remotely, if needed.

Any questions and concerns regarding biosafety or IBC operations should be directed to the appropriate contact person:

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Respectfully yours,

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