In accordance with UVA policies as of 28 May 2021, **individuals who are fully vaccinated (2 weeks past final dose) for COVID-19 may return to unrestricted facilities use.** For these individuals there is no requirement for distancing or reduced occupancy (rooms or boats). We follow [CDC guidance](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html) and UVA policies regarding masking; look for posted signs indicating current policies. Any person may continue masking as a personal choice. In order to be pardoned from COVID restrictions, you must notify the Site Director of your vaccination status before arriving on site.

- Colleagues and collaborators beyond UVA/LTER are eligible for station use.
- Masking is required when working with K-12 students.

**Individuals who are not yet fully vaccinated must abide by the COVID-19 safety policies** outlined in the remainder of this document. Please be sure to let the Site Director know if you will not yet be vaccinated at the time of your visit.

*In brief*
- Maintain low risk behavior for 14 days before arrival and attest that you are symptom free before visiting.
- Wear a properly fitting mask and maintain 6ft distance both inside and outside. Most lab rooms should not be shared (maximum occupancy of 1 when spacing is required).
- Plan for boating with no more than 3 people per boat, including the boat driver.

*Full policies are described below.*

No person may visit (or report to work at) the ABCRC while exhibiting symptoms of illness (such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath, see [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html)).

In case concerns about safety cannot be resolved within a project, any member of a research team may contact the station director Cora Baird, LTER lead PI Karen McGlathery (primary contacts), or UVA Environmental Sciences Chair Howie Epstein (secondary contact) for help establishing mutually agreeable solutions.

- Cora Baird (site director): coraj@virginia.edu, (757)620-7016
- Karen McGlathery (LTER lead PI): kjm4k@virginia.edu, (434) 825-6273
- Howie Epstein (Environmental Sciences Dept Chair): hee2b@virginia.edu, (434) 924-4308
If you are ever in doubt of the vaccination status of a fellow researcher, use all COVID precautions.

We will use a combination of pre-visit criteria and on-site procedures to maximize safety. These policies are intended to protect members of our research community as well as members of the local community in which the facility resides. Members of our research community will acknowledge all policies and their awareness that they have the option to opt out of the field work/living situation at any time if they have concerns about their safety or health. Success of our research depends on adherence to the enclosed policies. Failure to follow these policies could lead to a closure of the facility to researchers.

All Unvaccinated Visitors

All researchers requesting access to the ABCRC facilities (lab, boats, housing) must agree to do the following:

- Have low risk of exposure in the previous 14 days, including limitations on travel from their home, visits to public places, and groups >10 people. In addition, researchers must be able to answer ‘no’ to the following questions for the 14 days prior to their planned visit (taken from VA Dept of Health guidelines).

  Have you had
  1. A new fever (100.4°F or higher) or a sense of having a fever?
  2. A new cough?
  3. New shortness of breath?
  4. New chills?
  5. A new sore throat?
  6. New muscle aches (myalgia)?

- Complete UVA online COVID awareness & precaution training module from EHS or the equivalent from your home institution
- Complete daily health acknowledgement (UVA) or any equivalent from your home institution
- Fill out a daily attendance log while working in lab spaces at the ABCRC

To reduce the risk of transmission between communities, visiting researchers who are not fully vaccinated are asked to minimize visits to local businesses and attractions during their stay; use of take-out options are encouraged. Such restrictions apply to grocery stores, bars, ice cream shops, and convenience stores, among others.

When planning for short overnight stays, each visitor should bring what they need for the duration of the visit. Scientists conducting intermittent research are encouraged to make day trips when feasible and to minimize repeated stays as much as possible. Between the options to make two overnight visits or stay once for three nights, plan to do the latter. Researchers and staff should coordinate closely to maximize productivity while minimizing travel and community contact.
Anyone who begins experiencing symptoms* while at the facility must immediately cease research activity, alert the station director (or staff), self-isolate, and seek testing by calling Eastville Community Health Center at (757) 331-1086. Plan to return home as soon as possible, and stay in contact with station staff, the University, and the local health department to facilitate contact tracing if the test results are positive. ABCRC sign in/out logs and float plans will be used to facilitate contact tracing, as needed. (*i.e. answering “yes” to any of the six [6] screening questions above)

Station staff will alert all visitors and employees if a case of COVID-19 is suspected on site.

Any visiting researchers should also alert the station director if you develop symptoms within 14 days of your time at the ABCRC.

Unvaccinated visiting researchers should not ride in vehicles together, sit for a meal together, share a bathroom, enter each other’s housing units, or be within six feet of each other. Special precaution should be taken to ensure that research protocols and field excursion do not unvaccinated researchers within 6 feet of each other.

## Housing

### Short Term Visitors

While on site:

Unvaccinated visitors are expected to wear face coverings whenever outside your bedroom or suite. Short term lodging will be established at moderate densities. No more than one research group will be housed per wing of a suite. Our default density will be one person per bedroom, which is equivalent to two persons per bathroom and up to 4 people per kitchen. Densities may only be higher if visiting research groups arrive in ‘pods’ that can safely share living space. In such cases, use of common spaces may be coordinated (e.g., scheduled meal preparation times) to limit overlap between groups.

Visitors are encouraged to occupy open air spaces whenever reasonable. Distancing (6’) should be maintained during any shared use of the decks and porches. Masks may be removed in open air outdoor spaces when a space greater than 6’ can be maintained.

Outdoor chairs should be sanitized regularly.

A grill is available for cooking outside.

We will maintain increased cleaning standards throughout the facility. Overnight visitors are expected to

1. Sanitize surfaces before and after each use. (For example, kitchen surfaces should be wiped down with approved solution after each meal is prepared.)
   a. Clean high touch surfaces (light switches, door knobs, etc) at least twice a day using the cleaning supplies provided.

2. Use the clean linens provided, washing them in the laundry facilities as needed during your visit.

3. Upon departure
a. Remove all linens that you used and place them in the linen service bags on the porch (near suite A). Place any non-white items in the designated hamper.

b. Any dishes used should be washed on hot with detergent and left in the dishwasher.

c. Wipe high touch surfaces on your way out.

**Housekeeping** will clean weekly and between visitors (room turnover), following UVA custodial recommendations:

1. Housekeeping staff will wear masks inside all buildings.
2. All staff have received training on how COVID 19 spreads and how to protect yourself when entering a space that was occupied by someone who tested positive for COVID 19.
3. We treat all surfaces as if they are contaminated and observe universal precautions.
4. Use an EPA certified disinfectant and make sure the proper dwell time is followed to kill COVID 19.
5. Touch points, restrooms, kitchenettes, and any shared spaces should be disinfected more frequently.

**If someone begins to show symptoms** (see the six screening questions in pre-visit section)

- Alert staff, follow the response plan outlined above (for testing and tracing), and **make plans to depart the facility promptly**.
  - Visiting research groups should establish an evacuation plan in case symptoms emerge within the group during your visit.
- **Use the following procedure upon vacating the suite**
  - All white linens should be washed in hot water with bleach and then placed in the linen service hampers. They will be professionally laundered by ABCRC’s contractor during regular service.
  - If you have used an ABCRC pillow, dispose of it with your garbage.
  - Used dishes should be run in the dishwasher on the hot setting and left sealed.
  - Garbage should be gathered into the bags provided and disposed of directly in the dumpster on premises.

- **Vacated suites will remain locked for 48 hours prior to be cleaned following approved protocols, using designated solutions, by our housekeeping contractor**.
- **In case symptoms emerge, all visitors have the right to vacate the facility and may be asked to vacate ahead of schedule. Any visitor who leaves should stay in contact with station staff and the University.**

**Research Labs**

*Congregating is strictly prohibited, especially in transitional spaces like the Prep Lab. Check with the Site Director about room occupancy limits. Except where specified, rooms should always be occupied by only a single user if they are unvaccinated.* Any person occupying a lab is encouraged to close doors
and open windows to optimize air flow and safety. Wipe all workstations with sanitizing cleaners (provided) before and after your lab work. Alternative workstations are available on the porches. Researchers living on site or visiting overnight should use the bathroom in their suite to minimize shared use of lab bathrooms. Everyone is encouraged to take responsibility for monitoring room occupancy and dispersing unintentional gatherings.

Common use equipment will be used on an assigned basis and should be cleaned between uses. As needed, laboratory equipment will be decentralized to allow assigned use without sharing (e.g., for freezers and ovens).
The front porch rinse station is retained for field gear clean up.
The back porch rinse station is an available workstation.
During loading and unloading, Prep Lab doors should be propped open to reduce frequent touching and to minimize contact between people coming and going.
Unvaccinated individuals should be sure to maintain 6’ distance from all other users when in the seminar room. An outdoor screening and meeting space will be provided.

Vehicles
Commonly touched surfaces should be cleaned with an EPA-approved solution before returning the vehicle. Only staff may use vehicles; due to spacing restrictions, only vaccinated individuals may share a vehicle.

Boats
Boating density restrictions remain in place if any person on board is not vaccinated.

- If anyone aboard is unvaccinated: Maximum operating capacity is 4 passengers plus the operator (5 people total on boats over 21’). No more than 3 people are permitted on boats under 21’.
  - While stationary (boarding, loading, deploying equipment) on a boat with two persons aboard, the captain occupies the stern while the passenger occupies the bow. While underway, the two occupants should reside on opposite sides (starboard and port) of the boat as distant as is safely feasible.
  - To further reduce risk of airborne contamination while underway, boats will be operated at a maximum speed of 2500-3000 rpms or the lowest rate at which planing can be maintained on any given vessel.
    - Personnel densities aboard are conservatively determined by boat footage; these calculations make the most sense based on a stationary platform, so partitioning of passengers on board during operation is needed to further reduce risk.
- Face coverings must be worn whenever reasonable while underway; fishing buffs can help keep cotton face masks in place while underway. Buffs alone do not provide adequate protection and should not be worn in place of cloth or surgical masks.
- While working aboard, each person is responsible for handling their own supplies, including research equipment and personal provisions. Each person will have access to a dedicated cooler for supplies; no shared drinks or foods will be permitted.
Each boat will contain a supply of hand sanitizer that should be used before/after eating and drinking or when shared surfaces are unavoidable (e.g. boarding ladder). *The influences of both proximity and ventilation (air exchange) on risk of virus exposure were considered in the development of these policies. Some overview of what is known is available here.*

**Field work**

As possible, bring and maintain your own field gear. Each person should select and retain field gear for the duration of the season to avoid sharing or exchange of materials.

- Buffs, snorkels, and wetsuits (among others) should be maintained and cleaned by the user throughout the season or visit.
- At the end of the field season or major sampling campaigns, all reusable field gear will be washed by staff with EPA approved solutions.

Always wear face coverings, as is reasonably safe (e.g. not if a wet mask unreasonably restricts breathing).

Maintain social distancing (6'); as needed, protocols should be adapted to enable distancing. To help with logistics, *try planning your research as if each person is diving and needs to be able to function independently during sampling* (i.e., avoid handing off materials or samples, have a plan for data recording without people in close proximity).

- Staff will have resources on hand to help facilitate more independence (e.g. less exchange of materials) during sampling.  
- **No one should execute protocols for which distance cannot be maintained** unless negative tests can be confirmed for all field members directly adjacent to sampling days. Research teams are responsible for coordinating testing if that approach is used.

For everyone: **work at low densities but never alone.** Confirm your plan for a field buddy with staff. If you find yourself or your field buddy in need of first aid, be sure to use PPE and maintain distance whenever possible (e.g. by directing response rather than administering it yourself). If you need medical assistance, please call ahead before visiting a medical facility.

**Appendix: Resources & General Guidance**

To help with the uncertainty and anxiety induced by the COVID 19 situation, counseling and mental health services are available through UVA and local community services.

- **UVA Counseling And Psychological Services (CAPS)** at 434-243-5150 and 434-297-4261 after hours
- **Eastern Shore Community Services Board Emergency Services** call center at 757-442-7707

Our policies and decisions at the Coastal Research Center will be based on Federal, State, County, and University of Virginia public health recommendations and will be guided by information on COVID-19 prevention and response from reliable sources.

Virginia Coronavirus overview + status [https://www.virginia.gov/coronavirus/]
Current (as of March 15, 2021) general guidelines for prevention of Covid-19 include:

1. **Vaccination**, which is fully effective two weeks after the final dose
2. **Mask wearing** (properly fitted to cover mouth and nose) – *Note that buffs alone do not provide adequate protection and should not be worn in place of cloth or surgical masks.*
3. **Hygiene** (e.g., wash hands, avoid touching face, wipe surfaces)
4. **Physical (Social) Distancing** 6 ft (2m) minimum
5. **Quarantine & Isolation** If you are sick or may have been exposed, self-quarantine for two weeks.
6. Cleaning and disinfection protocols follow UVA custodial guidance (see below) to minimize environmental exposure and use EPA-approved sanitizing solutions.
7. Additional CDC and VA guidance on PPE, hygiene, and quarantine