

Laboratory Restart Checklist



The unprecedented nature of the COVID-19 crisis has led to unique challenges for the research community, including the need to navigate how to safely shut-down and restart lab operations. The checklist that follows can be used as a general template to help guide and inform the restart process. If you have questions about particular items in your lab or require any assistance, please contact EH&S at askehs@umass.edu or (413)-545-2682.

Building Infrastructure

- Flush eyewashes for at least 3 minutes and ensure water is not discolored or opaque.
 - Additional flushing may be necessary to clear any contaminants.
 - If the water is not clear and colorless after 15 minutes of flushing, contact the Solutions Center at (413)-545-6401.
- Run water down drains for 5 minutes to refill traps. Traps can dry out when not in use.
 - Sewage-like odors around drains can result from dry traps. This includes floor drains. If odors are present and remain after running water down the drains, please contact EH&S at (413)-545-2682.
 - Check drains for leaks. If leaks are observed, report these to the Solutions Center at (413)-545-6401.
- Check all fume hoods to ensure these are operating correctly. Report any issues to the Solutions Center at (413)-545-6401.
 - Fume hoods should not be in alarm
 - Move the sash to ensure the air flow adjusts properly and hood does not go into alarm when sash is moved.
- Check for lights that are not working. Report any non-functioning units to the Solutions Center at (413)-545-6401.
- Check for evidence of leaks and report these to the Solutions Center at (413)-545-6401. Examples of potential issues include:
 - Popping floor tiles
 - Wet or new discolorations on walls, cabinets, or ceiling tiles
- Report any observed changes in airflow or other indications of mechanical issues to the Solutions Center at (413)-545-6401. Examples of potential issues include:
 - Doors to rooms are difficult to open or shut
 - Unusual sensation of turbulence, rushing air, or stagnant air
 - Unusual sounds (e.g., grinding or high pitched whirring) in hoods or air handlers
 - Temperature or humidity extremes
 - Burning, rubber-like, or other unusual odors

Materials and Support Operations

- Ensure that staff or operations within your department or college that are necessary for the support of particular activities and CORE facilities are in operation or that there is a plan in place to otherwise cover the functions of supporting operations.
- Restocking activities in labs may place a burden on supply chains. Be prepared for delays in receipt and availability of consumables.

Chemical and Physical Hazards

- Check all chemical containers to ensure these are in good condition. Request hazardous waste pick-up through CEMS for any items that have cracked lids, are bulging, or show other evidence of degradation.
- Ensure all peroxide-forming materials are tested within the past three months for the presence of peroxides.
- Request waste containers through CEMS if these were removed from the lab during the closure prior to beginning any work that will generate hazardous waste.
- Check that all electronic and mechanical equipment is operational.
- Check belts, tubing that is under pressure, and other points of failure on equipment to ensure this is in good condition before returning to operation.

Biological Hazards

- Check that the biosafety cabinet turns on and is operating properly
- Ensure that necessary PPE (such as N95 respirators) are available for any future work before initiating related activities
- Clean all benches prior to beginning work again.
- Check all water baths, heating blocks, draws in refrigerators, controlled temperature rooms, etc. for bacterial growth and clean accordingly.
- Ensure waste containers in equipment and vacuum traps are empty and clean. Add new disinfectant to vacuum traps.

COVID-19 Precautions

- Only research activities that are described in research continuity plans approved by the department chair, dean, and Vice Chancellor for Research and Engagement may be conducted on campus per the [guidance of the Vice Chancellor of Research and Engagement](#).
- Plan for halting research operations on short notice should that be necessary.
- Daily monitoring of one's health and well-being prior to coming to work can aid in early detection of infectious disease and is an effective measure to prevent community spread of COVID-19. All employees should review the [COVID-19 Daily Self Checklist](#) before reporting to campus. If you answer yes to any of the questions, you must stay home, notify your supervisor and call or email the COVID-19 HR Response Team.

- Maintain social distancing while in labs and offices. Ensure there is 6 feet between you and others.
 - Consider setting up clearly demarcated work stations to easily visualize and assist with social distancing.
 - Consider foot traffic and areas around work stations. Creating one way traffic patterns and designated walking areas may be helpful.
 - Set up use schedules and sign-ups for shared equipment.
 - Consider relocating shared equipment away from occupied work areas.
 - Consider working in shifts.
 - Divide lab into teams and alternate schedules
 - Consider proximity of assigned work areas
 - Adhere to maximum occupancies guidelines where available and post these in areas.
- Wash your hands frequently and change gloves often.
- Clean high touch surfaces frequently following [cleaning guidance](#) provided by EH&S. Clean shared equipment after use. Disinfect reusable and shared PPE. Ensure there are sufficient cleaning supplies on hand before resuming lab operations. Keep a cleaning log including the date, time, and scope of cleaning.
- Face coverings must be worn in indoor spaces and in outdoor spaces where social distancing cannot be maintained at all times. See the [University's Guidance on Face Coverings](#).
 - When working with open flames, pyrophorics, or larger quantities of flammable materials, wear face coverings made of natural fabrics (e.g., cotton). Synthetic fabrics can melt to your skin, or in some cases burn very rapidly, in the event of a fire.
 - Immediately replace face coverings that become contaminated or soiled.
- Limit visitors and service providers in the lab. Non-chemical deliveries to the lab should be left outside of the lab if possible. Follow the [Guidance for Vendors and Service Providers Entering Labs](#).
- Post signage reminding lab personnel of hygiene and safety protocols. Posters are available for download from the EH&S website: <https://ehs.umass.edu/>
- Where feasible, physical partitions that are taller than a standing worker can be installed to separate workstations that cannot be spaced out. Installation of such features in a lab or office has the potential to negatively impact airflow and should be evaluated by EH&S and physical plant HVAC personnel to ensure such features would ensure adequate air quality.
- Advise lab personnel to keep a daily log of contact with others and places they go. This can assist with contact tracing later if necessary.
- Do not work alone in the lab for any hazardous activities. Work when others are present in the lab whenever possible while maintaining social distancing. Minimal risk activities can be conducted with a [remote buddy system](#) when necessary. Please contact EH&S for any questions regarding risk assessments or buddy systems.