**Field Safety Policy - DRAFT**

**Introduction**

One of the fundamental objectives for Lakehead University is to be recognized as a comprehensive, research-intensive university, both nationally and internationally for excellence in teaching and learning. In working towards these goals, conducting innovative fieldwork will be required in some areas of study. While this work can offer an important opportunity to advance understanding and knowledge, fieldwork presents a unique set of risks not present in traditional laboratory settings. The purpose of this document is to establish policy and resources to assist members of our University Community in recognizing, planning for and mitigating reasonably foreseeable risks without impeding innovative work and impacting the quality of data collection.

**Purpose**

This policy respects four key principles:

1. Maintaining healthy, safe, productive, stimulating and educational field experiences;
2. Minimizing harm or loss to participants or University;
3. Meeting the University’s obligations, both legal and moral, with respect to the health, safety and security of all members of the University Community; and
4. Ensuring that resources are available for participants to assist them in risk mitigation and planning activities.

The objective is that safety will be an integral part of research planning. This policy recognizes that the majority of field work conducted by members of the University community entails no greater risks than those that would be encountered by participants carrying out everyday activities, such as hiking and boating, and can be safely conducted with a minimum of planning, preparation and documentation.

**Definitions**

*Accident:* incident that results in injury to a participant but is not life-threatening in nature.

*Critical Incident:* Any incident that directly threatens the life, safety or security of a participant.

*Field work:* Practical work to gain experience and knowledge through firsthand observation conducted in a natural, non-urban environment, involving exploration or surveying.

*Hazard:* A situation or circumstance that is potentially harmful or damaging to life, limb, property or the environment.

*Near-miss:* Incident that does not result in injury or damage to University property or the environment, but had the potential to.

*Supervisor:* Person who plans for, directs or allocates funding for completion of the field work.

**Scope**

This policy applies to all members of the University engaged in field work research and is designed to assist in the prevention of work-related injuries and ensure that emergency plans are both coordinated and communicated. Undergraduate field trips, field schools, and field laboratories are not covered by this policy, organizers should consult the Lakehead University Risk Management office for guidance on “Risk Management for Field Trips.”

**Policy**

Guidelines or modified procedures particularly appropriate for specific activities undertaken by a Department or Researcher, but consistent with this policy may be developed and are strongly recommended.

* Prior to commencing field work, the Supervisor will conduct a risk assessment. Supervisors are the ideal person to complete these assessments, as they are familiar with the conditions of the field, hazards likely to be encountered and other inherent risks related to collection of data. Results of the risk assessment must be documented. In an effort to assist in this task, sample risk assessment forms will be provided by the Office of Human Resources – Health and Safety in conjunction with the Office of Risk Management.
* The Supervisor will attempt to mitigate hazards identified by the risk assessment and will document these measures.
* Risk assessments and written safety procedures must only be repeated/renewed if the geographic area of field work, nature of the risks encountered, and/or the experience level of the participants change significantly from those documented.
* Risk assessments and written safety procedures must be repeated/renewed following accidents, critical incidents or near miss incidents occur.
* Field work participants (including volunteers) must be familiar with the risks identified by the risk assessment and any written safety procedures in case an accident and/or injury occurs. This must be documented initially during the new personnel orientation process, and should be reviewed and signed prior to each field season.
* The initial training shall include an overview of the nature of the field work, identified hazards, the risks associated with the hazards, and the proposed control measures as outlined in the safety plan including; the operation of any safety equipment to be used; the correct use of any personal protective equipment; first aid facilities; when-lost procedures; communications procedures; and emergency procedures.
* The use of volunteers is permitted with the clear and documented understanding that the University will not accept responsibility for any claim on the University arising from injury or death of voluntary workers. Queries concerning the University policy on volunteers should be directed to the Office of Risk Management.
* All field work must be conducted in such a way that potential risks are minimized. It is not advisable for any person to complete field work alone. Where it is appropriate for an individual to work alone, that individual must let someone know their location and expected time of return.
* Any participant conducting field work has the right to refuse what they consider unsafe work.
* In remote field work locations at least one participant must have up-to-date first aid training and must ensure there are sufficient first aid supplies. First aid kits are available from the Office of Human Resources – Health and Safety.
* Participants shall observe the laws and customs of the country/region in which they are conducting research.
* Staff who participate in remote field work should be reasonably fit and have no known existing **uncontrolled** medical conditions which could reasonably be expected to give rise to a life-threatening situation.

In accordance with the Ontario Occupational Health and Safety Act and regulations responsibilities for administering this policy are:

1. **Responsibilities of Human Resources – Health and Safety and Office of Risk Management**
   * Ensure that this policy remains compliant with law and regulation, but does not increase unwarranted administrative requirements on Supervisors or participants.
   * Ensure that resources and materials are available to Supervisors and participants to assist in planning, identification of foreseeable risks and documentation for due diligence purposes.
2. **Responsibility of Supervisor**
   * Provide field specific training on safe work practices, recognition of hazards.
   * Ensure all participants have completed standard health and safety training with the Office of Human Resources.
   * Plan (or assist in planning) the field work so that it can be conducted safely.
   * Document training of participants.
   * Document risk mitigation practices employed.
   * Provide a full incident report for any near miss incidents and accidents to Human Resources as soon as it is possible.
   * Endeavor to immediately notify Human Resources upon the occurrence of critical incidents. It is appropriate for this notification to occur immediately after the injured person is in the care of medical professionals and as communication facilities in the field allow.
3. **Responsibilities of Participants**
   * Follow the instruction, guidance and training provided by the supervisor.
   * Complete standard health and safety training provided by the Office of Human Resources prior to starting field work.
   * Conduct work in a safe manner.
   * Report any near miss incidents or accidents to Human Resources and your Supervisor as soon as it is possible.
   * Consult your supervisor if/when unforeseen hazards occur, proceed with field work only after steps have been taken to mitigate the hazards.

**Evaluation**

This policy should be reviewed every five (5) years by the Field Safety Committee, with membership from each department conducting field research (as appointed by the appropriate Dean).