

BII: Evolving Meta Ecosystems (EVOME)

SAFE AND HARASSMENT-FREE WORKING ENVIRONMENT FOR OFF-CAMPUS RESEARCH

Update Feb. 10, 2025

Update Aug. 13, 2025.

The EVOME Institute is committed to fostering a safe and harassment-free community of scientists and to provide an environment where everyone has the freedom to pursue challenging, collaborative interdisciplinary scientific research free from undue concern about physical safety or professional misconduct. This document outlines protocols for ensuring safety and inclusivity during off-campus or off-site research, promoting a harassment-free field environment. EVOME comprises researchers and students from various educational and non-profit organizations working as a unified team. All participants must adhere to the Institute's established guidelines and protocols.

The EVOME Institute Executive Committee has determined that the work at Toolik Field Station, and other locations in the Arctic are considered off-site. Each year EVOME will develop a field safety plan with the Woodwell Climate Research Center Safety officer, Battelle ARO/Polar Field Services and Toolik Field Station that will include field safety, inclusivity and communications. This work includes research conducted by vehicles or aircraft, in field camps, or visits to other laboratories associated with EVOME.

1. Field Setting - EVOME fieldwork occurs in Arctic Alaska, spanning the Brooks Mountain Range. The unpredictable weather can vary from freezing to 80°F, with rain or snow possible at any time. The research is based at the Toolik Field Station (TFS), run by the University of Alaska, requiring adherence to Toolik/UAF code of conduct, including Title IX training. TFS provides Emergency Medical Services, field and GIS support, labs, dormitories, and a 24-hour cafeteria to approximately 100 researchers at the height of the field season.

Researchers must document a daily travel plan and follow check-in/check-out procedures. Research sites are along the Dalton Highway (Haul Road), a rugged gravel road servicing the trans-Alaskan oil pipeline. Challenges include poor road conditions, heavy truck traffic, and frequent tire flats. Researchers will be trained in how to change tires, use CB radios, and operate satellite phones and Garmin inReach® satellite communicators. Sites are accessed by foot from the road, requiring navigation of uneven terrain while carrying equipment and safety gear. Wildlife includes bears, wolves, moose, and other animals requiring vigilance and communication. Insects like mosquitoes and blackflies are common nuisances, with protective gear and repellents provided. Researchers will receive training in animal encounters and bear spray use. Staying hydrated is critical due to the dry Arctic environment, with a minimum of 2L of water carried by each person, with extra water available in the nearby truck. Safety training (wildlife, navigation, first aid) will be provided via a variety of mechanisms (classes prior to field work, experienced EVOME personnel or Battelle Polar Field Services).

2. Safe and Harassment-free work environment - Several approaches will be used to foster an inclusive environment. All researchers must agree to EVOME's Team Norms (code of conduct) and complete training on inclusion and harassment. EVOME Team Norms aim to ensure inclusivity and respect by outlining expectations for appropriate behavior, prohibiting harassment

and discrimination, defining boundaries for personal interactions, and providing specific protocols for reporting violations. Inclusivity training will be conducted either by our Team Science consultants or through organizations like Field Futures (<https://www.fieldfutures.org/>), the ADVANCEing FieldSafety Training Program (<https://fieldsafe.colorado.edu/node/630>) or the BII RCN program. Because Toolik Field Station is our basecamp, everyone must complete TFS's Title IX inclusivity training. Every researcher must provide proof of having completed these requirements before engaging in research. Roles and responsibilities of team members will be discussed prior to field work and during the field season at weekly or daily meetings to discuss how each person's research is going and the goals of the project. Additional meetings between mentors and mentees will discuss research progress and personal issues.

3. Protocols for Communication - Cell phone service and internet is available at Toolik Field Station, and at limited locations along the Haul Road, thus anyone can use their personal cell phone or computer for communication. Toolik has general use phones and computers. Everyone must be comfortable using a satellite phone and a Garmin inReach® satellite communicator for use along the haul road and at camps. All satellite phones/devices must be accessible to all team members at all times. Responsibility for the phone/device, including carrying in the field and battery charging, will rotate among team members.

4. Protocols for Reporting - EVOME personnel have three options (see below) for reporting and resolving harassment issues. A poster describing all the reporting pathways (including email and/or phone contact information) will be on the EVOME website and shared drive, given to everyone via email, and posted in the EVOME lab at Toolik and home institutions and in the vehicles and field camps. Regardless of the reporting mechanism, the EVOME Executive Team will be informed and will work within the EVOME Team Norms and institution processes and legal guidelines to take appropriate actions. If the issue involves someone on the Executive Committee, that person will not attend the deliberative meetings to determine the appropriate action. These actions may include a mediated discussion, providing the researcher with new required training, immediate removal from the field site or removal from EVOME Institute.

The three reporting options available to all EVOME personnel are:

1) Toolik Field Station. All users of Toolik Field Station (TFS) must complete the Toolik Field Station Code of Conduct and Sexual Misconduct Training. This training outlines what constitutes violations and how to report violations and includes Bystander Intervention training, reporting to the Camp Management Team, the Toolik Science Community Liaison, the off-site TFS Communications or directly to the UAF Title IX office. Posters outlining the reporting mechanisms are in every lab and public space at Toolik. These mechanisms can be used to report issues within EVOME or with other researchers at TFS.

2) Home institution procedures. EVOME consists of 6 institutions (Woodwell Climate Research Center, Columbia University, University of Connecticut, University of Alabama, University of Alaska, Fairbanks, and Macalester College), each of whom has reporting procedures. Individuals will be trained by the home institution on their particular reporting procedures.

3) EVOME Institution. EVOME's Team Norms/Code of Conduct outlines expectations for appropriate behavior and provides protocols for reporting violations. These norms are consistent with the Toolik and Woodwell Center Codes of Conduct. EVOME reporting pathways include a trusted colleague, the EVOME Ombudsman, an on-site designated EVOME researcher, anyone on the EVOME Executive Committee, and a 24 hr. Woodwell Duty Officer Line.