

# **SAFETY** *information*

FOR RESEARCH FACULTY & STAFF



**UF** UNIVERSITY of  
FLORIDA

## **UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA POLICE DEPARTMENT AND LAW ENFORCEMENT CONTACT INFORMATION**

### **EMERGENCY 911**

Dial 911

### **Non-Emergency Contact Information**

University of Florida Police Department 392-1111

#### Local Law Enforcement Agencies:

Alachua County Sheriff Department 955-1818

Gainesville Police Department 334-2400

Alachua Police Department 462-1396

Levy County Sheriff Department 486-5111

Marion County Sheriff Department 732-9111

Putnam County Sheriff Department (386) 329-0800

For all other non-emergency phone numbers of police departments not listed, refer to your telephone directory or call information.

University of Florida IACUC 273-9535

University of Florida  
Office of Research 392-9271

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## INTRODUCTION

While most citizens value the research that occurs at the University of Florida, there are groups and individuals who oppose some of the University's studies. Animal rights (AR) groups are currently the most vocal and visible critics; however, certain environmental groups/individuals have been known to partner with AR groups to oppose a variety of research activities, including animal research, bio-defense research, genetics research, and/or many other kinds of studies. There appear to be two main schools of thought in the AR movement – those who conduct legal protests, carry out publicity campaigns, and file lawsuits; and others who use a more extreme approach and are willing to harass individuals and break laws in order to achieve their goals.

This guide is for University of Florida personnel who may be targeted by activists at work and/or at home.

The guide includes:

- *Information on the most common tactics used by activists*
- *How to respond—proactively and reactively*
- *Resources with associated information*

Questions or comments about this guide should be directed to the Institutional Animal Care and Use office at 392-9917.

## TARGETS AND REASONS

The most visible target for activists and extremists is animal research. However, there are many other types of research that draw the attention of activists. The list below is a sample, but not necessarily all-inclusive:

- *Animal-based research that uses animals outside their natural habitat*
- *Genetics research*
- *Bio-defense research*
- *Stem cell research, particularly if associated with embryonic stem cells*
- *Any research perceived to be potentially harmful to the environment*

- *Technology research perceived to be potentially harmful to animals and/or the environment*

In addition to targeting research institutions, activists have begun targeting any associated company or organization. Examples include banks, insurance companies, investors, contractors, suppliers, and others who do business with a research institution such as the University of Florida.

## WHO IS AT RISK?

In the past, activists mainly targeted institutions and only occasionally made individuals the focus of a campaign. Over the last few years, however, activists are increasingly focusing on employees within targeted institutions. The following table details possible risk levels for University employees based on their position at the University.

<b><u>Position/Responsibility/Role</u></b>	<b><u>Relative Risk</u></b>
Primary Investigators (PI) overseeing targeted research <i>(Note: Visibility from media exposure or high-profile publications can sometimes increase this risk.)</i>	High
Senior administrative leaders (president, VPs, program directors)	High
Research associates/assistants and others who directly support (PIs) and/or their research	Moderate
Operational managers responsible for facilities, security, etc.	Moderate
Lab employees, operations, administration, etc.	Low

## POTENTIAL ACTIVITIES

Tactics used to target individuals may vary from simple to sophisticated. The list below illustrates strategies (both legal and illegal) currently being used by various AR groups:

- *Public records requests. These requests are based on Florida's public records law and often seek information that can be construed as damaging or embarrassing to a targeted employee. Public records requests also seek to gain confidential information for future use in potentially illegal actions, as well as home addresses and phone numbers of researchers.*
- *Targeted mailings. Letters, postcards, e-mails, etc., can be easily generated (en masse) and distributed widely to oppose a person's work/research on various grounds. These mailings can also become harassing, intimidating or threatening communications intended to cause anxiety and fear. Such communication may threaten an individual with future harassment or more severe tactics, including criminal activity.*
- *Websites and e-mail campaigns.*
- *Direct (in person) lawful confrontations. These may involve on-site protests at the University (but directed at a specific individual); protests at events such as lectures, classes, symposia, etc., given by the targeted individual; protests at a specific person's work area; or protests at an individual's home or in his/her neighborhood/community.*
- *Direct unlawful confrontations. These go a step beyond lawful protests in which illegal activities such as trespassing, "sit-ins," occupations/disruptions of administrative or operational areas, and other actions occur. These activities are illegal but are usually not violent or destructive.*
- *Direct action against property. Such tactics are always illegal. They may include graffiti, vandalism, theft (including theft of personal information and credit details via mail theft), and sabotage, destruction of property, animal releases, and arson.*

- *Physical assaults. Like direct action against property, these tactics are illegal. They may include throwing substances onto individuals (e.g., real or fake blood, feces, caustic liquids, etc.); deliberately shoving, bumping, or otherwise physically intimidating people; and even relatively rare physical attacks.*

Note: Legal or low-level criminal actions (e.g. trespassing, disorderly conduct, etc.) are far more common than violent tactics. However, there is an ongoing debate in the AR movement about the “acceptable” use of violence. In addition, lower level activity frequently precedes more serious actions. Because of this, any activist activity directed at an individual University of Florida faculty/staff member should be immediately reported to University Police Department. Contact your local law enforcement if the criminal activity occurs off campus.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESPONSES**

We recognize that each situation is unique. However, the following advice applies to the vast majority of situations when University of Florida employees become the target of activists:

- *Report immediately any actual or suspected activity by activists to BOTH the University Police Department and local law enforcement (if applicable).*
  - \* *Call the University Police Department first if the activity occurs anywhere on campus (including Progress Park).*
  - \* *Call 911 first if the activity occurs off campus and the situation appears to be an emergency. The University Police Department can also offer advice on whether or not to call law enforcement.*
- *ALWAYS carefully examine all mail and packages that are received.*
- *Avoid direct contact with activists outside of formal meetings or other structured environments.*
- *Keep a sample of any flyers or materials that are being distributed.*

- *Save all e-mails, letters, packages, voice mail, or any other communications from activists whenever possible. Provide these to the University Police Department and local police (if appropriate).*
- *Take photographs of people, objects, flyers, graffiti, or property damage. HOWEVER, do this only when it can be done without placing yourself in danger or increasing tensions with activists.*
- *Write down as much information about an encounter as possible (e.g., time/date/location, vehicle license plate numbers, physical description and clothing, signs or slogans, etc.) HOWEVER, avoid doing this in front of activists.*
- *Let your supervisor or department head know as soon as possible if you are targeted.*
- *Keep your car doors and windows locked and closed when driving CAREFULLY past activists. Concentrate on your driving at all times; do not drive fast in an attempt to avoid a confrontation.*
- *Consider implementing the home safety steps beginning on page 9 if there is reason to believe you may be targeted at home.*

While a proactive approach may help alleviate or lessen the threats posed by activities, there are times when no action is the appropriate response. In such instances, public safety officials recommend:

- *Don't approach or try to engage activists in conversations, discussions, debates, or arguments. Doing so may only increase the chances of future harassment.*
- *Don't do anything that may escalate the situation (for example, turning on a lawn sprinkler system).*
- *Don't get too close. Activists have been known to throw fake blood or other substances on individuals. They may spit, and on rare occasions, strike out physically. Keeping your distance eliminates these options.*
- *Don't attempt to force your way past activists, either physically or with a vehicle. You may be charged with a crime even if the activists were technically violating the law.*

- *Don't ignore "low level" incidents (e.g., unfriendly e-mails, flyers at your home or on your vehicle, etc.). These may indicate more intimidating tactics to come. Forwarding this information to University Police Department may allow the University General Counsel, Police and/or city/state law enforcement to take action.*
- *Don't open mail or packages that appear to have been tampered with or are otherwise suspicious (e.g., bulky letters, mail from an unknown sender, mail/ packages without a postmark or return address, etc.).*
- *Don't respond to questions regarding your research via telephone, e-mail, or letters. Refer such inquiries to the University's News and Public Affairs Office.*

In the event you become the victim of a demonstration or harassment on campus, please call University Police Department immediately. If the event occurs off campus, please call the local law enforcement.

## **A. RESPONSES TO OFFICE DISRUPTIONS**

Activists like to stage demonstrations when they have the best chance of intimidating large numbers of workers, so prime demonstration times include early mornings or late afternoons when staff are arriving or leaving work. Another harassment technique is to appear as if the activists are filming or photographing people arriving or leaving the premises.

A common tactic for activists is to enter office, administrative, or laboratory areas in a group with the intent of disrupting and intimidating staff. Office disruptions usually last only a few minutes and tend to be well organized. Activists plan office disruptions carefully in order to bypass security, get in unobserved, cause the maximum disruption, and then leave before security or law enforcement can arrive.

The vast majority of office disruptions, while frightening, are non-violent. However, anytime activists come into close proximity

with their target audience, there is an increased risk of physical confrontations and violence. Because of this, the following responses should be followed for office disruptions:

- *Select “safe” areas within your work environment in advance of a problem where staff can go during an office disruption. Offices, conference rooms, or similar areas that can hold several people and can be locked from inside are ideal. A designated safe room should also have a phone with an outside line and ideally a back door or window leading out of the facility.*
- *Discuss with office/lab staff what to do if a disruption takes place.*
- *Determine if there are high value resources (computers, equipment, data storage, etc.) that could be quickly secured during a disruption, without putting staff at risk.*
- *In the event of an office disruption, immediately call the University Police Department.*
- *Do not attempt to physically detain activists or otherwise stop them. Intervene physically only in extreme cases where violence against a person is imminent or taking place, and even then, only within your own training or experience. Remember that inappropriate actions on your part may put you at risk of civil and/or criminal liability, even if activists were acting illegally.*
- *Retreat to a “safe” area or exit the facility. If neither option is possible, move to the safest place possible and wait until the disruption is over.*
- *Make mental notes of the activists’ descriptions, including distinctive features such as tattoos, piercing, hair color and style, gender, clothing and shoes, etc. Do not write this down during the disruption as this may incite activists to try to stop you.*
- *After the disruption ends, check to see if anyone was injured. Seek medical care, if needed.*

- *Contact University Police Department to let them know that the activists have left and report any injuries and/or damage.*
- *Observe the route and means the activists used to leave, but only if possible without placing yourself at risk. Valuable information includes the exit path and vehicle descriptions (including license plate numbers) if possible.*
- *Photograph and/or videotape activists, but only if it is safe to do so.*
- *Note any items or places physically touched by activists and protect those items/areas. If activists were not wearing gloves, law enforcement may attempt to get fingerprint information to identify the activists.*
- *Carefully examine the entire work area for anything left behind, but do not touch anything until after University Police Department arrives. Things to look for include the following:*
  - \* Noise makers: devices designed to make painfully loud noise, either immediately or later when activated by a timer.*
  - \* Stink bombs: these may be devices that are ignited by a flame immediately or later from a timer.*
  - \* Stinky fruit: activists sometimes obtain a particular type of fruit that smells of rotting flesh, cut it into small pieces, freeze the pieces, and distribute them inside a facility during a disruption. When the fruit thaws, it begins to smell and can make a facility uninhabitable for some time.*
  - \* Flyers or other printed information.*
  - \* Packages, boxes, backpacks, or other containers that could contain dangerous items (e.g., toxic/caustic chemicals, incendiary devices, bombs, etc.).*
- *Carefully examine the entire work area and note any damage or items missing.*
- *Photograph damage, suspicious items, flyers, etc. if possible.*

- *Debrief with office staff after the event and seek professional assistance through the employee assistance program, if appropriate, for staff that are distressed or need counseling.*

## **B. RESPONSES TO HOME DISRUPTIONS/HARASSMENT**

- *Plan ahead for where you and your family will go inside your home if activists show up. Ideally, you should move to an area of the home that is not visible to the activists, has a phone, and provides an easy exit from the home.*
- *Consider talking to trusted neighbors to let them know of the potential for demonstrations.*
- *Keep a camera with film (such as a disposable camera) or a video camera available for taking pictures of any vandalism or damage, and possibly of activists, if this can be done safely and discreetly.*
- *During a demonstration, stay in your house and bring pets inside if possible. Close and lock doors and windows and lower shades/close curtains. Call the local law enforcement for assistance.*
- *Call law enforcement and give the following information: Your exact location; the number of activists that appear to be present and what they are doing; your affiliation with the University and the reasons why you have been targeted. Ask for the incident number for your call and write it down.*
- *If you are arriving home in your vehicle, do not stop at your house. Call the local law enforcement from your car or a neighbor's home. Wait for the arrival of police and be sure to ask for identification from officers not in uniform. Ask the officer for the case number for your incident.*
- *Do not respond to or antagonize the activists in any way. Engaging the activists will likely only serve to encourage them.*

- *If possible, record descriptions and license plate information for all vehicles in the area.*
- *Postpone any expected visitors.*
- *If activists come onto your property and/or approach your home, tell them that they must leave and are not permitted to return. Be sure to tell law enforcement and University Police Department that this happened. Activists who refuse to leave your property or ignore posted warnings may be prosecuted criminally, depending on the specific incident.*
- *After a demonstration at your home, carefully inspect your property and the exterior of your home, and your vehicle(s) if parked outside. Be sure to document and photograph, if possible, any damage done by activists, including graffiti.*

## **PROTECTING PERSONAL INFORMATION**

Everyone should take routine steps to protect his or her personal information. This is especially true for researchers and other at-risk staff members who may be targeted by activists attempting to find and exploit personal information. Such information might allow them to purchase expensive items in your name, order and deliver unwanted goods to your address, open fraudulent credit accounts, enter into contractual agreements in your name, cancel services like utilities and phone without your knowledge, and post personal information on the Internet to facilitate harassments and identity theft.

The Internet has substantially increased the ease with which personal information can be uncovered. For example, “people find” sites can generate access to personal information (and at low cost) from a wide variety of sources that were previously available only to those who knew exactly where to look.

Examples include:

- *Public records (tax information, marriage and divorce records, and others) are now collected routinely and input into databases, or public bodies make such records available online and searchable, including by “people find” companies. (Previously, finding tax lot information on an individual required knowing the county in which the person lived and then physically going to the recorder’s office, searching for the record, and paying for a photocopy. These steps have been largely eliminated, and the same information can be found by paying a few dollars for an Internet search.)*
- *Private businesses and organizations now generate revenue by allowing “people find” companies to search their databases. Examples include some financial institutions, title insurance companies, and escrow companies. An unexpected example is service industry businesses – everything from pizza parlors with home delivery services to retail businesses that also sell access to their databases.*
- *Public record holders, such as a county recorder’s office, sell lists of information to virtually any buyer, including credit card companies, banks, and mortgage and insurance companies.*
- *Access to court (both civil and criminal) records is increasingly automated and online, making it easier for “people find” companies to include this information in requests made via the Internet. These records are typically considered “public” and often include personal information.*
- *On public media such as Facebook, set privacy setting to only show information and pictures to confirmed friends.*

Because of those risks, the Police Department recommends carefully protecting and/or shielding the follow information:

- Home address\*\*
- Home phone number and other personal phone numbers (cell phones, fax numbers)\*\* <sup>1</sup>
- Social Security number
- Driver’s license number
- Bank and credit card account numbers
- Personal Identification Numbers (PINs) and passwords
- Personal information regarding others in the household (e.g., spouse employment information, child daycare or school information, etc.)

While protecting personal information is increasingly difficult, there are steps one can take to protect his or her information and make it more difficult for others to access it. The following is a list of recommended precautions to take.

- *Do not give your home address or phone numbers to anyone you do not know and trust.*
- *Use your work address for business purposes and as a contact address for people other than family and friends.*
- *Those at high risk or currently being harassed should consider obtaining a post office box for all mail delivery.*
- *Insist that all businesses with which you do business protect your personal information. Some businesses must have your home address (e.g., phone company, cable company, etc.). In such cases, read the privacy policy they provide and exercise your right to restrict release of your information. Other businesses do not need your home address and can use a business address or P.O. Box.*

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<sup>1</sup> This information is considered public record, and therefore has to be released if a FOIA request is received. However, such information can be excluded from the UF directory.

- *Refuse to provide personal information (e.g., name, phone number, address, etc.) to retailers who now routinely ask for it at the point of sale. Retailers have systems that can match the credit card information to the information you provide at the register.*
- *Refuse to provide personal information to telemarketers since some of these calls may be fraudulent.*
- *Use an address other than your home on your personal checks. Technology exists to easily scan the address from the check optically and place it on lists or into databases.*
- *Tell your employer, family, friends, co-workers, and others not to release any personal information about you without your permission.*
- *Have your home phone number non-published and ensure this means that it will both not be listed in any printed directories and not be given out by directory assistance. However, remember, this information is a public record.*
- *Have the caller ID function for your outgoing number blocked so that it is not displayed when you call someone with caller ID. If you routinely call anyone who does not permit blocked calls, you will have to temporarily remove the block when you place a call. The phone company can provide instructions for this. It is simple, but the steps vary. This step will prevent companies from acquiring your phone number for their databases.*
- *Have caller ID installed on your phone so you can identify incoming calls.*
- *Block calls to your phone coming from unidentified or blocked callers.*
- *Ask your phone company how to initiate a trace on a call should you receive a threatening or harassing call.*

- *Plan in advance what to say if you do receive a threatening or harassing call. You should always tell the caller explicitly never to call again. This will make the next call from the same caller “telephonic harassment” which is considered a crime.*
- *Log the time, date, and details of harassing calls and provide this information to the appropriate law enforcement agency.*
- *Have your home address, phone, and other information removed from mailing lists, rosters, directories, phone books, etc., whenever possible.*
- *Shred, burn, or otherwise destroy any trash or recycling that contains personal information— especially documents containing Social Security numbers, bank transaction information and credit card applications.*
- *Place fraud alerts with the three credit bureaus ([www.experian.com](http://www.experian.com); [www.equifax.com](http://www.equifax.com); [www.transunion.com](http://www.transunion.com)) if you suspect that your personal information may have been compromised.*
- *Protect the personal information of all family members, including children, as you would your own.*
- *Always verify the authenticity of anyone claiming to be a law enforcement official before giving out information. University Police Department can assist you with this.*
- *Never “verify” any of your personal information to anyone or in response to an e-mail that came unsolicited. There are multiple scams aimed at tricking people into giving out personal information “for their own protection.” A common tactic is to send an e-mail that claims to be from a bank or credit card company, asking you to “validate” or “verify” information on an account because of an alleged potential fraud.*

Regrettably, nearly all of the precautions listed here involve some level of effort and inconvenience. However, there are clear benefits to making your personal information as safe as possible, including reducing the risk of home harassment and identity theft. You need to evaluate your desire and need for protection based on your own comfort level with any possible threats and your tolerance for possible problems associated with not protecting your information. University Police Department is available to assist you in figuring out what protections are right for you.

## **PROTECTING OFFICES & LABORATORIES**

In addition to personal harassment, activists have recently targeted the work areas of individual researchers. These actions encompass “denial of service” attacks on computers, phone harassment campaigns, frequent unwanted fax transmissions, and other office disruptions. Actions at other research facilities have included sabotage, destruction of research data, animal liberations, and arson. Taking precautions in your work areas can be inconvenient and/or costly but will ultimately prove beneficial. The information below is intended to offer many possible options so that individuals can choose the one(s) most appropriate for their situation.

- *Review the contents of staff/office directories and shield/remove personal information, direct office/fax phone numbers, specific staff office locations, and other information that is not necessary but could aid activists.*
- *Ensure all directories are as secure as possible from theft.*
- *Review signs in and around “at-risk” facilities and minimize the amount of specific information on signs as much as possible.*
- *Ensure that all staff wear University IDs, visible at all times.*
- *Lock all offices, laboratories, buildings, and other areas.*

- *Frequently back-up all critical research data at an off-site location and/or an off-site computer server.*
- *Question or report all unknown people in non-public areas.*
- *Install high-security locks and/or access control systems.*
- *Install closed circuit television (CCTV) in sensitive areas and at entrances/exits.*
- *Account for all keys, codes, IDs, and confidential information issued to staff when they leave the institution.*  
*When possible, limit access times/days for staff in sensitive areas.*
- *Immediately report any suspicious activity to University Police Department and/or a senior administrator.*

## **PROTECTING PERSONAL PROPERTY (HOME SAFETY TIPS)**

Besides harassment at work, activists are also targeting individuals at home. The following recommendations, while occasionally inconvenient and/or costly, are intended to help protect your property from these actions. Questions about the appropriate options can be directed to the University Police Department. These suggestions will allow you to create a personal safety plan.

- *Scan the exterior and interior of your dwelling every time you return. Is anything unusual that might suggest something has been tampered with or that someone has entered the building during your absence? Also check your vehicle(s), if parked outside, for obvious signs of tampering or vandalism. Never enter your house or vehicle if there are signs of unauthorized entry or tampering. Call the police and wait for them to arrive.*
- *If you discover damage to your property, inform the local police immediately and then University Police Department.*

- *Tell the police that you are involved in research and that you believe activists may be responsible for the damage.*
- *Install home security features appropriate to your individual situation. These might include sturdy locks on doors, windows, storage sheds, and garages; motion-sensor outdoor lighting; fences or other barriers (e.g., dense hedges with thorns); intrusion and panic alarms; and closed-circuit television.*
- *Tell babysitters, house sitters, and others who will be responsible for or staying in your home what to do if activists show up at your home.*
- *Contact trusted neighbors and ask them to call you and/or the police if they notice anything suspicious at your home or in the neighborhood.*
- *Let trusted neighbors and law enforcement know when you will be away for an extended time.*
- *Contact your local law enforcement agency and explain that you are in a high-risk category because of your research activities or administrative position at the University.*
- *Ask for a meeting with the law enforcement supervisor for your area and let him/her know about your concerns. Request extra patrols and tell law enforcement about any security features at your home.*

- *Store garden hoses inside a locked shed or garage when not in use. (Activists have used hoses to damage homes by running them inside through a pet door, mail slot, or open window and flooding the home while the occupants are away.)*
- *Store items that may be used for vandalism in a locked shed or garage. Such items may include paint, ladders, gasoline, garden tools, etc.*
- *Keep vegetation trimmed to minimize hiding places near your home, particularly near windows and doors.*
- *Post “beware of dog” signs, even if you don’t have a dog.*
- *Post “no solicitation” and “no trespassing” signs. Depending on your law enforcement jurisdiction and district attorney, this may allow easier prosecution of anyone who approaches your home. Check with your homeowner’s association regarding the posting of such signs.*

NOTE: Dialing 911 from a cell phone may not connect you with the nearest dispatch center. If you dial 911 from your cell phone, be sure to tell the dispatcher the precise location of the problem. Contact local law enforcement for more information or to discuss the possibility of a home security survey and safety plan.

## HOME SAFETY CHECKLIST

Home Address \_\_\_\_\_

Nearest Cross Street: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Note: This information may be needed by a babysitter or other person staying in your home in the event of an emergency.

### PLANNING

- Talk to family, friends, and neighbors about issues and discuss what to do if activists show up.
- Protect your personal information as much as possible.
- Implement home protection steps as appropriate, including contacting local law enforcement.
- Let neighbors and law enforcement know when you will be away from home for an extended time.

### DAILY PRECAUTIONS

- *Be observant of suspicious people, mail, etc.*
- *Scan your property, home, and vehicle for signs of tampering or other suspicious activity.*
- *Do not give out personal information to unknown callers or visitors.*

### IF ACTIVISTS SHOW UP AT YOUR HOME

- *Stay inside and avoid direct contact with activists.*
- *Call law enforcement immediately. Give your exact location; tell the dispatcher that you are at risk because of your research role or administrative position at the University; insist that an officer be sent to your home immediately; ask for the incident or call number from the dispatcher and write it down.*
- *Close doors, windows, blinds, etc.*
- *Call University Police Department*
- *Observe and/or photograph activists, but only if you can do so safely and discreetly.*
- *Write down as much specific information as possible (personal descriptions, vehicle descriptions, quotations, statements from signs/banners, etc.)*
- *Once activists are gone, carefully inspect your home, property, and vehicle(s). Document/photograph any damage, graffiti, etc. Save flyers or other literature left behind, and avoid touching it as much as possible. Report any suspicious items, packages, etc., to law enforcement and the University Police Department immediately.*



