

**SAFETY INFORMATION  
FOR RESEARCH AND  
HIGH-PROFILE  
PERSONNEL AT THE  
UNIVERSITY OF  
PITTSBURGH**

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## INTRODUCTION

While most citizens value the research that occurs at the University of Pittsburgh, certain groups and individuals 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, transplantation research, genetics research, and 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 Pittsburgh 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*
- ❖ *Contact information for resources available to help you*

Questions or comments about this guide should be directed to the office of the Vice Chancellor for Research Conduct and Compliance at (412) 383-1399.

## 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:

- ❖ *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 associated companies or organizations. Examples include banks, insurance companies, investors, contractors, suppliers, and others who do business with a research institution such as the University.

## 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.

Position/Responsibility/Role	Relative Risk
Primary Investigators (PI) overseeing targeted research (Note: Visibility from media exposure or high-profile publications can sometimes increase risk.)	High
Senior administrative leaders (chancellor, vice chancellors, program directors)	High
Research associates/assistants and others who directly conduct 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 information requests. These requests are based on freedom-of-information laws and often seek information that can be construed as damaging or embarrassing to a targeted employee. Public information requests also seek to gain confidential information for future use in potentially illegal actions.*
- ❖ *Targeted mailings. Letters, postcards, e-mail, etc., that oppose a person's work/research on various grounds can be easily generated (en masse) and distributed widely. 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.*
- ❖ *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.*
- ❖ *Unfounded complaints to regulatory agencies such as the USDA. Even if the concerns are unfounded, the regulatory agency must investigate, requiring an investment of time by the researcher and University.*
- ❖ *Direct unlawful confrontations. These go a step beyond lawful protests and often include illegal activities such as trespassing, sit-ins, occupations, or 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), sabotage, destruction of property, animal releases, and arson.*
- ❖ *Physical assaults. Like direct action against property, these tactics are illegal. They may include throwing substances; deliberately shoving, bumping, or otherwise physically intimidating people; and even 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 Pittsburgh faculty or staff member should be immediately reported to University of Pittsburgh Police at (412) 624-2121. Contact the 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 Pittsburgh employees might become the target of activists:

- ❖ *Avoid direct contact (including telephone and e-mail exchanges) with activists outside of formal meetings or other structured environments.*
- ❖ *Inform your staff and students that they should never respond to queries regarding the treatment or care of animals from unknown parties; such queries should be referred to the Attending Veterinarian at (412)648-8950.*
- ❖ *Immediately report any actual or suspected activity by activists to both the University of Pittsburgh Police Department and local law enforcement (if applicable). Call University of Pittsburgh Police first if the activity occurs anywhere on campus, including all satellite facilities. Call 911 first if the activity occurs off campus and the situation appears to be an emergency. University of Pittsburgh Police can also offer advice on whether or not to call other law enforcement agencies.*
- ❖ *Notify your supervisor or department head as soon as possible if you are targeted.*
- ❖ *Always carefully examine all mail and packages that you receive.*
- ❖ *Notify University of Pittsburgh Police of any unattended or suspicious packages.*
- ❖ *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 University of Pittsburgh Police 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.*
- ❖ *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. If your path is blocked, retreat and notify the Police immediately.*
- ❖ *Implement the home safety steps outlined in this brochure if there is reason to believe you may be targeted at home. Work with the University of Pittsburgh Police to notify local law enforcement.*

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

- ❖ *Do not approach or try to engage activists in conversations, discussions, debates, or arguments. Doing so may only increase the chances of future harassment.*
- ❖ *Do not do anything that may escalate the situation (for example, turning on a lawn sprinkler system).*
- ❖ *Do not 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.*
- ❖ *Do not 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 of Pittsburgh Police may allow the University’s General Counsel, Police Department, and/or city/state/federal law enforcement to take action.*
- ❖ *Do not 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.).*

In the event you become the victim of a demonstration or harassment on campus, please call

University of Pittsburgh Police immediately. If the event occurs off campus, please call the local law enforcement first then immediately contact University Police (412-624-2121).

## **RESPONSES TO WORKPLACE DISRUPTIONS**

Activists like to stage demonstrations when they have the best chance of intimidating large numbers of workers and generating media coverage for local distribution. Prime demonstration times include early mornings or late afternoons when staff members are arriving or leaving work. Another harassment technique is to appear as if the activists are filming or photographing people entering or leaving the premises. Often there is no film in the camera or video recorder.

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 or laboratory disruptions usually last only a few minutes and tend to be well organized. Activists plan office disruptions carefully in order to bypass security, enter 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 or laboratory disruptions:

- ❖ *Act proactively to select “safe” areas within your work environment where staff can go during an office or laboratory 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 and plan in advance with office and laboratory 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 or laboratory disruption, immediately call the University of Pittsburgh Police.*

- ❖ *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 the University of Pittsburgh Police to let them know that the activists have left and report any injuries and/or damage.*
- ❖ *Observe the route and means the activists use to leave, but only if this can be done without placing yourself at risk. Valuable information includes the exit path and vehicle descriptions (including license plate numbers), if possible.*
- ❖ *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 of Pittsburgh Police arrive.*
- ❖ *Carefully examine the entire work area and note any danger or items missing.*
- ❖ *Photograph damage, suspicious items, flyers, etc., if possible.*
- ❖ *Debrief any personnel involved after the event and seek professional assistance through the employee assistance program, if appropriate, for staff that may be distressed or need counseling.*

## **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 or a video camera available for taking pictures of any vandalism or damage, and possibly of activist, but take pictures only if you can do so 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 of 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 local law enforcement and the University of Pittsburgh Police 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.

The Internet has substantially increased the ease with which personal information can be uncovered. It is recommended that the following information be carefully protected:

- ❖ *Home address*
- ❖ *Home Phone number and other personal phone numbers (cell phones, fax numbers)*
- ❖ *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 such information and make it more difficult for others to access it. The following is a list of recommended precautions you may wish to take.*
- ❖ *Do not give your home address 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.*
- ❖ *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.*
- ❖ *Ensure that your home phone number is not listed in any printed directories and not given out by directory assistance.*
- ❖ *Have the caller ID function for your 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 think 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.*
- ❖ *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.*

Nearly all 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 and tolerance for possible problems associated with not protecting your information. The University of Pittsburgh Police Department is available to assist you with determining what protections are right for you.

## **PROTECTING THE WORKPLACE**

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 theft, 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 as much as possible, the amount of specific information on signs.*
- ❖ *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. Do not be confrontational. Notify University Police of suspicious persons in non-public areas.*
- ❖ *When personnel leave the institution, account for all University keys, codes, IDs, and confidential information they may have possessed.*
- ❖ *Immediately report any suspicious activity to the University of Pittsburgh Police at 412-624-2121 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 of Pittsburgh Police. 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 local police and wait for them to arrive.
- ❖ If you discover damage to your property, inform the local police immediately and then University of Pittsburgh Police at (412) 624-2121. 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 the University of Pittsburgh Police to contact local law enforcement for your area and let them 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, hoses, garden tools, etc.
  - ❖ Keep vegetation trimmed to minimize hiding places near your home, particularly near windows and doors.
  - ❖ 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.

**NOTE:** Dialing 911 from a cell phone may not connect you with the nearest dispatch center. If you do 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

### POLICE/SHERIFF:

Emergency (Fire, Police, Medics).....Dial 911

### UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH POLICE:

Emergency/Non-emergency: (412) 624-2121 (24 hours, all days)

Website: <http://www.police.pitt.edu/>

### 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 local 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; and ask for the incident or call number from the dispatcher and write it down.
- ❖ Close doors, windows, blinds, etc.
- ❖ Call University Police at (412) 624-2121.
- ❖ 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 University of Pittsburgh Police immediately.