

2023 NOAA/AOML/HRD Hurricane Field Program – APHEX

HEALTH & SAFETY

NOAA's annual Advancing the Prediction of Hurricanes Experiment (APHEX) Hurricane Field Program (HFP) is an integral component of tropical cyclone research and operations. Data gathering is the HFP's ultimate goal, but the paramount concern is the safety and health (including mental health) of those individuals doing the work. Experience has shown that the most dangerous phase is not during flights, but on the ground, especially during time off-duty. More generally, recent studies show that the majority of researchers are putting themselves in uncomfortable situations to get the data they need; 60% of women researchers have experienced some form of violence in the field, and only 2% reported these events.

NOAA has a robust [Occupational Safety and Health Policy](#) and [Aviation Safety Policy](#). The policy describes safety training requirements to participate in flights aboard NOAA aircraft and states that all NOAA employees and affiliates shall report unsafe or unhealthy working conditions to their immediate supervisor or federal sponsor, who will take appropriate actions to resolve the condition/issue.

Bullying, harassment, and violence, especially of a sexual nature, are not tolerated during the HFP, either during flight missions or during off-duty time. [NOAA's Workplace Violence Prevention and Response](#) Program works to establish a professional and respectful culture through violence prevention and response; education and training; victim support; reporting procedures and appropriate accountability that enhances the safety and well-being of all NOAA employees, affiliates, and visitors. Any HFP participant who experiences a hostile work environment, bullying, harassment, or violence during the HFP, **whether a federal employee or not**, can utilize WVPR's services.

WVPR runs the [Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Helpline](#) as a crisis support service designed for anyone in the NOAA community who has experienced sexual assault and/or harassment. Anyone can access live, confidential help over the phone by calling **866-288-6558**, or get confidential, one-on-one support through a secure instant-messaging platform at <https://hotline.rainn.org/noaa>. All services are anonymous, secure, and available worldwide and at any time.

Everyone can receive contact information for local resources anywhere by texting **202-335-0265**. A mobile app for [iOS](#) or [Android](#) can be used to connect directly with trained support specialists over the phone.

Leadership recommends participating in, or listening to recorded sessions of, The Fieldwork Initiative to Stop Sexualized Trauma (available [here](#) or [here](#)), and/or the Towards Sexual Literacy in Fieldwork training (available [here](#)).

The [NOAA Behavioral Health and Wellness Program](#) is dedicated to supporting personnel and their dependents. The NOAA Research Chief of Behavioral Health and Wellness is LCDR Candice Karber, LICSW, BCD, [U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps](#), who can be

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reached at Candice.Karber@noaa.gov, or by phone or text at **202-989-5472**. The program has two missions:

Mental Health: Ensuring that everyone who experiences signs or symptoms of mental health and/or substance use issues has access to high-quality services in a supportive culture that encourages treatment.

Wellness: Promoting the wellness of the workforce as a whole by identifying opportunities to improve well-being (decreasing stress, increasing morale, etc.).

The NOAA [Employee Assistance Program](#) provides services like counseling and stress management to create a positive and productive work environment for all employees. This service is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year through Federal Occupational Health. (FOH). Employers of NOAA affiliates provide similar services, such as through the [University of Miami Faculty & Staff Assistance Program](#) or the [Mississippi State University Employee Assistance Program](#). Others may find information through their respective Human Resources groups.