



## NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

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ARLINGTON, VA 22230

# U.S. Antarctic Program Physical Qualification Important Information

Antarctica is remote, with a harsh environment and limited medical facilities. Because of this, all grantees, employees, and technical representatives are required to pass stringent medical and dental examinations before deploying to the Ice. For more details about deploying to the Ice, read the [United States Antarctic Program Participant Guide](#).

The Antarctic Support Contractor (ASC) processes all United States Antarctic Program (USAP) participant deployment paperwork. To facilitate your deployment process, please read and execute the steps below very carefully. If you have any questions, ASC Polar Medical Operations staff (**855-300-9704**) can guide you through the process.

## Electronic Submission of Medical Forms

The National Science Foundation (NSF) is bound by the requirements of the Privacy Act of 1974 and its amendments. All information collected for the purpose of determining your physical qualifications for deploying to Antarctica is considered confidential. NSF and its contractors that are in receipt of your medical and personal information are required to maintain your confidentiality and secure your information. NSF currently is unable to secure data that is transmitted electronically and therefore cannot protect your confidentiality if you transmit the data over unsecured lines.

In order to ensure that there is no violation of the Privacy Act or any other federal law pertaining to confidential or personally identifiable information, ASC Polar Medical Operations has been instructed not to accept any electronically submitted medical forms.

Any medical forms received by email will be disposed of without action.

If you have any question regarding NSF privacy rules or procedures, please contact the NSF Office of the General Counsel at **(703) 292-8060**.

## Changes in Medical Condition

You are required to report any changes in your health status that occur after your physical examination to ASC Polar Medical Operations by mail or by phone: at **(855) 300-9704**. Failing to do so may result in a denial of your application for assignment to the Polar regions. Willfully providing false statements to a Federal agency or its representatives is a criminal offense.



## Medical Care en Route

You are personally responsible for all costs associated with medical and dental care in New Zealand or Chile. If you need medical care in *New Zealand*, please contact the PAE NZ Medical Coordinator:

Leeann Stringer, RN at (720) 568-2886 or email [leeann.stringer.contractor@usap.gov](mailto:leeann.stringer.contractor@usap.gov), who can assist you with arranging medical/dental appointments.

There will be a charge for your visit to the doctor/dentist.

If you require health care on your travel through *Chile*, you may contact the following individuals at your local DAMCO office for assistance in making appointments:

In *Santiago*: Carlos Maturana - [carlos.maturana@damco.com](mailto:carlos.maturana@damco.com) ph: 569-9885-7884

In *Punta Arenas*: Gonzalo Aviles - [gonzalo.aviles@damco.com](mailto:gonzalo.aviles@damco.com) ph: 569-7548-3942

Secondary contact: Joe Salinas [horacio.salinas@damco.com](mailto:horacio.salinas@damco.com) ph: 569-7988-4013

## Important Insurance Notice for Grantees

NSF does not provide insurance for grantee personnel while en route or in Antarctica, and it does not fund acquisition of this insurance as a direct cost in its research grants.

Persons traveling to Antarctica under the award are expected to have insurance appropriate to their situations and to ensure that all such insurance provides coverage in foreign countries and during transit between their home institutions and the port of embarkation for Antarctica so that any needed medical care, compensation for property loss, worker's compensation, or survivor benefits will be covered. The awardee should ensure that all team members, including but not limited to non-employees such as graduate students and volunteers, have appropriate insurance.

Check your insurance policies to be sure that flights aboard scheduled military aircraft and work on research vessels are covered.

All team members (paid or volunteer) traveling to Antarctica should be affiliated in some manner with your organization(s), so that any worker's compensation issues arising from injuries sustained while deployed can be addressed by your organization.



## Privacy Notice - Medical Examination Records for Service in Polar Regions

The National Science Foundation's Division of Polar Programs is responsible for ensuring that all personnel traveling to Antarctica under the auspices of the USAP meet certain medical standards, as outlined in 45 Code of Federal Regulations Section 675 (62 Fed. Reg. 31521 (June 10, 1997)). This medical screening process requires that certain medical records be generated on each individual participating in the USAP.

The information requested on USAP provided forms is solicited under the authority of the National Science Foundation Act of 1950, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 1870 et seq. It will be used by NSF and its contractors and subcontractors in the medical screening process to determine whether an applicant is qualified for deployment to Antarctica. An individual medical file will include information collected to determine whether one is qualified for Antarctic assignment, as well as clinical files that may be generated if one receives medical treatment in any of the USAP medical clinics in Antarctica or any off-ice treatment facilities arranged by the USAP.

The records are used for three primary purposes: (1) to determine the individual's fitness for Antarctic assignment, including individual waiver requests; (2) to assist in determining an appropriate course of medical/dental treatment should the individual seek medical care with any medical care provider while in Antarctica; and (3) to provide documentation for addressing quality of care issues associated with these medical functions.

Records contained within this system may be released to individuals involved in those three functions. Such individuals include, in addition to designated NSF employees as needed for assigned duties: (a) designated medical care practitioners and their administrative support personnel involved in determining an individual's fitness for Antarctic assignment, including individual waiver requests; (b) medical care providers in NSF-supported stations and field camps in the polar regions where the individual is assigned; and (c) medical experts advising NSF on quality of medical care issues associated with NSF's polar research programs. In addition to these purposes, information in the medical records may be released to the individual's personal or examining physician or the individual's designated emergency point of contact when disclosure is necessary to determine initial medical clearance or to review treatment options if the individual requires medical attention while on assignment in Polar Regions. The determination of whether the individual is physically qualified/not physically qualified (PQ/NPQ) may be released to representatives of the individual's sponsoring organization, including academic institutions and investigators on a grant, to inform them whether an individual is approved for deployment or not.

If necessary, information may be released to federal, state, or local agencies, or foreign governments when disclosure is necessary to obtain records in connection with an investigation by or for NSF; and to another federal agency, a court, or a party in litigation before a court or in an administrative proceeding if the government is a party, or when NSF determines that the litigation or anticipated litigation or proceeding is likely to affect the Agency.

Submission of the information requested is voluntary. However, if you fail to provide any of the requested information, NSF, or its contractor, may be unable to process or to approve your application for polar deployment through the USAP.

More detail about how and where these records are maintained in accordance with the Privacy Act, 5 U.S.C. 552a, is contained in the National Science Foundation's System of Record Notice, Medical Examination Records for Service in the Polar Regions, available upon request from NSF.<sup>1</sup> No disclosure of information contained in your medical file will be made except as described by NSF's System Notice or as otherwise authorized by law. You may request a copy of your record for review.

<sup>1</sup> For a copy of the System Notice, please contact the Division of Polar Programs Safety and Occupational Health Manager at NSF at (703) 292-7438, or write to Safety and Occupational Health Manager, Division of Polar Programs, National Science Foundation, 4201 Wilson Blvd., Suite 755, Arlington, VA 22230.



Pursuant to 5 CFR 1320.5(b), an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to an information collection unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The OMB control number for this collection is 3145-0177. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 10 hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions. Send comments regarding this burden estimate and any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to: Suzanne Plimpton, Reports Clearance Officer, Office of the General Counsel, National Science Foundation, Arlington, VA 22230.

## **Influenza Vaccination**

Every deploying USAP participant is required to receive an influenza vaccination prior to deployment. Participants should obtain a flu shot from their medical provider at least two weeks prior to deployment and submit the supporting documentation to ASC Polar Medical Operations. In the event that participants were unable to obtain a flu vaccine, one will be administered in Christchurch prior to departing for Antarctica, or upon arrival at Palmer Station. Receiving the vaccination is a condition of your deployment. Exemptions based on medical reasons will be considered on an individual basis.

If you have had a severe reaction to a flu shot in the past (severe reaction is throat, mouth or airway swelling, difficulty breathing, rash or hives), then submit documentation from the treating physician or emergency room. If you have a proven severe reaction to egg protein (same symptoms as above), then submit the report from your physician or allergist. With proper documentation, you will be exempted from the requirement. Localized reactions associated with the flu shot may include mild problems such as soreness, redness, or swelling where the shot was given. They are generally not serious and do not justify exemption from the annual vaccination requirement.

To learn more about the flu vaccine, related benefits, risks, and precautions, contact the CDC.

Call 1-800-232-4636 (1-800-CDC-INFO)

Visit CDC's website at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu>

## **Personal Prescription Medications**

It is the responsibility of all participants to obtain a supply of their regular prescription medications to cover the time that they will be deployed. The Antarctic stations and vessels do not have prescription medicines available to support personal prescriptions. Participants will not be allowed to winter-over unless they have enough of their regular medications to last through the winter season.

### **Deployment to Palmer Station**

Chilean customs laws do not restrict the amount of personal medications hand-carried through Chile, and participants that are deploying through Chile can hand carry the amount of medication that they need for their deployment. Most health plans only allow one month of medication to be dispensed at a time. If you have difficulty in getting the amount that you need for your deployment, contact ASC Polar Medical Operations. If you have any questions about the procedure for transporting your prescription medications to Antarctica, please contact the ASC Polar Medical Operations, [polmedpq@utmb.edu](mailto:polmedpq@utmb.edu) (preferred), or leave a voicemail at (855) 300-9704.



## Deployment to McMurdo and South Pole Stations

The New Zealand custom laws only allow for three months of prescription medications and one month of controlled prescription medications to be hand carried through New Zealand. Therefore, if you will be deployed for a longer period of time, you must make arrangements for additional medication to be mailed to you from an approved source through the Army/Air Force Post Office (APO) mail system. The U.S. Postal Regulations (DMM 601.12.11) states that: "Prescription drugs are licensed medicines that require a written order by a medical doctor or pharmacist before they can be obtained. Prescription drugs, including those that contain controlled substances, may be mailed by drug manufacturers or their registered agents, pharmacies, or other authorized dispensers as permitted by 21 CFR 1307.12 or in compliance with any regulation of the Food and Drug Administration or other applicable law.

The addresses to use by the authorized sender is

### McMurdo Station-Grantee and ASC



[Participant's Name]  
PSC 769, Box 700  
APO AP 96599-9998

### South Pole Station -- Grantee and ASC

Participant's Name]  
PSC 768, Box 400  
APO AP 96598-0001

It is important that you hand carry the initial three months of medication (one month for controlled medications) in order to provide enough time for the mail to reach you in Antarctica. Most health plans only allow one month of medication to be dispensed at a time.



## **Eyewear Policy for Antarctica**

Everyone in Antarctica is required to wear sunglasses or other protective eyewear (e.g. goggles)! You are traveling to a part of the world where scientists have documented increased ultraviolet radiation because of depletion in the ozone layer. Snow and ice reflect 85% of Ultraviolet Radiation (UVR) and can cause a serious, painful, and disabling condition known as snow blindness. Appropriate protective eyewear is especially important on windy days to protect against volcanic ash particles and snow blowing in the eyes.

The type of sunglasses or eye protection you wear while you are in Antarctica is very important. Sunglasses must block 100% of the sun's Ultraviolet Rays. Some dark glasses do not block UVR and cause the iris to widen and admit more light that can cause damage to the eye. Frames must be non-metal to avoid injury to the skin from the cold. Retaining straps are mandatory. Side protectors are recommended, but not required.

### **Prescription Eyewear:**

If you wear prescription eyewear and choose to wear prescription sunglasses during your deployment, the sunglasses must meet the above criteria. Please obtain a current prescription from your ophthalmologist/optometrist (including pupillary distance) and bring it with you when you deploy, in the event you need replacement eyewear while deployed. Contact lenses can be worn in Antarctica. At the South Pole, however, the dry climate can cause difficulties. It is suggested that you carry your lenses on your person to avoid possible damage and/or freezing. Limited lens cleaning supplies are available for purchase at the McMurdo, Palmer, and South Pole Station stores (heat-type is NOT available).

**Bring two pairs of glasses, prescription or non-prescription, in case of damage or loss.**