

Building a Better Fieldwork Future: Preventing & Managing Sexual Harassment and Assault in the Field

Scenario #1

You are a participant on a research team on a large ship collecting oceanographic data in the Indian Ocean. You and the rest of the participants celebrate the crossing of the equator by throwing a big party on the ship's bridge. During the party, one of your group members drinks too much and is stumbling around the room, eventually becoming sick. An unfamiliar ship crew member offers to take the participant back to the cabins, and the pair exit the bridge together.

1. Should you or another bystander take action in this scenario? Why or why not?
2. If yes, what type of action would you take in this situation?
3. What could your group have set up prior to the incident to avoid it?

Scenario #2

You are a participant on a field course camping in a remote site in the Sierras for six weeks. Halfway through the program, a student wakes you up in the middle of the night crying. The student tells you that they have been sexually assaulted by the staff logistics coordinator. The student is hysterical and doesn't know what to do. The staff logistics member has the car keys, map, and satellite phone, and there's no cell service. You're not scheduled to leave this site and relocate to another site for five more days.

1. What do you do in this situation as a bystander?
2. What protocols could you add to your own medical emergency plan to cover incidents like this?
3. What measures could have prevented this situation?