

Emergency Evacuation For People With Disabilities

Introduction

An Emergency Action Plan addresses the needs of faculty, staff, students, and visitors at specific locations during emergency situations, such as fires, hazardous spills, earthquakes, flooding, explosion, etc.

Prepare Ahead of Time

Safety coordinators should prearrange appropriate evacuation procedures and routes with individuals having disabilities and the people assigned to assist them. If they are on the ground floor, most people with disabilities will be able to exit safely without assistance. However, it is important to verify that individuals using any kind of assistive device are capable of successfully leaving the building, unassisted, via emergency routes.

How to Assist People Who are Hard of Hearing or Deaf

Some people who are deaf or hard of hearing may not perceive the audible fire alarm during an emergency. Use an alternative warning system, such as:

- Write a note to tell the person of the situation, the nearest evacuation route, and where to meet outside. (Sample script: "***FIRE! Go out the rear door on your right. NOW. Meet outside on the front lawn.***")
- Turn the light switch on and off to gain their attention, and then indicate through gestures or in writing what is happening and what to do.
- Do not use the light switch technique if you smell natural gas in the area.
- Give visual instructions to advise about the safest route or direction by pointing toward exits or evacuation maps.
- Ensure that a service animal is not separated from its handler, if possible.

How to Assist People with Low Vision or Blindness During Evacuation

Follow these steps when assisting an individual with low vision or blindness.

- Tell the person the nature of the emergency and offer your arm for guidance. This is the preferred method when acting as a "sighted guide."
- Be sure the person brings with them all mobility aides such as white canes.
- Give verbal instructions to advise about the safest route or direction, using estimated distances and directional terms to orientate the person.
- As you walk, tell the person where you are and where obstacles are located.
- When you reach safety, orient the person to their surroundings and ask if they need further assistance.
- The individual may have a guide dog that may be disoriented. Ask the advice of the person who is blind regarding your level of assistance.
- Ensure that a service animal is not separated from its handler, if possible.

Emergency Evacuation For People With Disabilities

How to Assist People Who Use Wheelchairs

Follow these recommendations when planning for and assisting people who use wheelchairs:

- Do not lift an individual in a wheelchair. There is too much risk involved for both the lay rescuer and the non-ambulatory person (back injury, loss of control of the wheelchair and person in it, tripping, falling).
- Read about Evacuation chairs for more information on safely transporting non-ambulatory individuals during an evacuation.

Be aware that some individuals in wheelchairs may have:

- Minimal ability to move, and lifting them may be dangerous to their well-being.
- Very little upper trunk and neck strength.
- Respiratory conditions and/or equipment that increase their vulnerability to smoke, vapors, or other airborne toxicants.

Always ask the person with a disability what their needs and preferences are regarding:

- Ways of being moved.
- Whether to extend or move extremities when lifting because of pain, braces, etc.
- Whether a seat cushion or pad should be brought along.
- Aftercare, if the individual will be removed from the wheelchair

If an individual is lifted from a wheelchair during evacuation:

- Ask others to bring the wheelchair.
- When the wheelchair is left behind, remove it from the stairwell and ensure it does not obstruct exit routes.
- Ensure that a service animal is not separated from its handler, if possible.
- Reunite the person with the wheelchair as soon as possible.

How to Assist People Using Canes, Crutches, or Walkers

Ask the person how you can best assist them in evacuating the area. Consider the evacuation options and the suitability of carrying the person. Carrying options include:

- Using a 2-person, lock-arm position
- Having the individual sit on a sturdy chair (preferably with arms) that is then lifted and carried
- Assist mobility-restricted people to an area of refuge or out of the building.

Emergency Evacuation For People With Disabilities

- Read about Evacuation chairs below for more information on safely transporting non-ambulatory individuals during an evacuation.

How to Use Evacuation Chairs

Evacuation chairs are specially constructed for evacuating non-ambulatory persons from multi-level facilities. Most designs enable 1 or 2 assistants to control movement down stairs without lifting. Here is a video of an evacuation chair in use. [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cR6cjRdw0vg>]. Edgewood College should consider purchasing evacuation chairs if we do not have some.

Use an evacuation chair only if you have been trained to do so. Do not make an emergency situation worse. Consider your options and the risks of injuring yourself and others in an evacuation attempt. Your first option is always to move the person to an area of refuge.

Before attempting to transfer a person to an evacuation chair:

- Ask the person how you can help transfer them to the evacuation chair.
- Ask them if they have any special condition you should be aware of.
- Discuss how you intend to lift them and where you are going before you begin.

Identify and Plan for Individuals Who May Need Special Assistance

Request that individuals who feel they may need special assistance self-identify so arrangements can be made in advance to meet their needs. Note that individuals with unobservable disabilities may or may not self-identify before an emergency. These individuals may need additional help during emergency situations. Such disabilities may include:

- A learning disability
- Arthritis
- Asthma
- Cardiac condition
- Chronic back problems
- Psychological disability

Prepare a personal evacuation plan for individuals requiring special assistance during an evacuation. The plan should include:

- Intended route and means of evacuation
- Who will assist them
- Areas of refuge where they can wait for assistance

Emergency Evacuation For People With Disabilities

Update the Emergency Action Plan annually to accurately describe:

- The number of people with disabilities who may require special assistance during an evacuation

Establish Buddy Systems

- Identify individuals with disabilities and the people assigned to assist them in the Residence Halls during an evacuation.
- Assign 2 or more staff members who are willing and able to assist a colleague with a disability during evacuation.
 - Identify and train assistants so at least 1 trained assistant is always present.

Know What to Do During an Evacuation

- Check the intended evacuation route for obstacles, if possible. Remember: smoke, debris, flooding, loss of electricity, or other impediments may be present.
- Move people who are unable to leave the building to an area of refuge. Possibilities include:
 - Most enclosed stairwells
 - An adjoining building behind fire doors
 - An office with a closed door, located a safe distance from the hazard
 - Exit balconies and corridors
- Assist individuals who are able to leave the building, following your planned evacuation route, if possible. Do not use elevators.
- Report to your designated assembly area for a head count.
- Notify emergency responders immediately about the location and condition of any people remaining in the building.
- Do not reenter the building until authorized to do so by an appropriate authority such as police, fire department, etc.

Emergency Evacuation For People With Disabilities

Emergency Evacuation Questionnaire for Students with Disabilities

This questionnaire is intended to be completed by individuals with disabilities to assist the development of a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan. Please provide such information to enable the college to develop a suitable plan. Once developed the Plan will be the means of escape procedure in the event of an emergency (including drills). If the practice drills identifies concerns in the implementation of the evacuation, then a review should be undertaken of the effectiveness of the plan.

LOCATION

1. Where are you based for most of the time? Please name: the building, the floor and the room number.
 - a. Building _____
 - b. Floor _____
 - c. Room Number _____

2. Do you routinely use more than one location in this building?
 - a. YES
 - b. NO

3. If you feel it is necessary please provide further details below. (Please list the buildings and floors you use in each building).

AWARENESS OF EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURES

4. Are you aware of the emergency evacuation procedures which operate in the building(s) you attend?
 - a. YES
 - b. NO
5. Do you require written emergency evacuation procedures?
 - a. YES
 - b. NO

Emergency Evacuation For People With Disabilities

6. Do you require written emergency procedures in an alternative format?
- a. Braille? YES NO
 - b. Enlarged print YES NO
 - c. Electronic format YES NO
7. Are the signs which mark emergency routes and exits clear and unobstructed?
- a. YES
 - b. NO

EMERGENCY ALARM

8. Can you hear the fire alarm(s) in your room or classroom?
- a. YES
 - b. NO
 - c. DON'T KNOW
9. Could you raise the alarm if you discovered a fire?
- a. YES
 - b. NO
 - c. DON'T KNOW

ASSISTANCE

10. Do you need assistance to get out of your room or classroom in an emergency?
- a. YES
 - b. NO
 - c. DON'T KNOW

If **NO** please go to Question 13

11. Is anyone designated to assist you to get out in an emergency?
- a. YES
 - b. NO
 - c. DON'T KNOW

If **NO** please go to Question 12

If **YES** give name(s) and location(s): _____

- b. YES NO DON'T KNOW
12. In an emergency, could you contact the person(s) in charge of evacuating the building(s) and tell them where you were located?
- a. YES NO DON'T KNOW

Emergency Evacuation For People With Disabilities

GETTING OUT

13. Can you move quickly in the event of an emergency?

- a. YES NO DON'T KNOW

14. Do you find stairs difficult to use?

- a. YES NO DON'T KNOW

15. Are you a wheelchair user?

- a. YES NO DON'T KNOW

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

Important Numbers to Know

Security Office, Weber Hall: (608) 663-3285

Security Emergency Line: (608) 663-4321

Security Non-Emergency Line: (608) 663-3285

Campus Assistance Emergency Line: (608) 663-4444

Emergency Response: 911