

Emergency Evacuation: Persons with Disabilities

Any person with special needs for assistance during a building evacuation has the responsibility to make this known - for employees, to their supervisor; and for students, to the Instructor in each of their classes.

The College cannot make an independent evaluation of such need. Assistance is usually needed by persons with temporary or permanent mobility disabilities (e.g. use of crutches, walkers, wheelchairs), with hearing or vision disabilities, as well as persons who may be immobilized due to distress.

Before an emergency evacuation:

- Be familiar with the evacuation routes posted on evacuation maps located on each floor; know the location of the nearest exit.

During an emergency evacuation:

- The Evacuation will begin with the sounding of building fire alarms. The emergency alarm in all campus buildings is the sounding of bells at a fixed rate.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES REGARDING PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES – General

- Students and staff are responsible for cooperating in their safe exit and evacuation.
- Disabled occupants in need of assistance to evacuate must self-identify whether or not they have previously done so.
- Instructors or Supervisors must delegate an appropriate number of students or staff to assist disabled persons to evacuate the building or, if impossible to evacuate, assist in moving to a stairwell to await the arrival of fire-fighters. In general, do NOT carry a person in a wheelchair down the stairs – trained fire-fighters will do that.
- Instructors/ Supervisors shall notify Security of the location of disabled occupants.

HOW TO ASSIST PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN AN EVACUATION

- Respect that the person with the disability may be the best authority on how to be evacuated.
- Offer assistance but let the person explain what help is needed.
- Carrying a person is not advisable except in the most extreme of circumstances.
- If the person has a service animal, be aware that a service animal's sense of direction may become confused during an emergency.
- Do not abandon the person after exiting a building. Lead to a safe place with others.

Assisting Persons who Use Wheelchairs

NOTE: ONLY in situations of EXTREME DANGER should untrained people attempt to carry a person in a wheelchair (see document – Emergency Evacuation #3 - ASSISTING A PERSON IN A WHEELCHAIR – IN SITUATIONS OF EXTREME DANGER).

- If the person is unable to speak clearly, look for a sign on the chair with printed instructions.
- Prior to moving the person, check for life-support equipment.
- Be aware that wheelchairs have parts not designed to handle the stress of lifting.
- If you and/or others cannot safely carry a person up/down stairs, don't. Instead
 - Position the person in the safest place possible according to the emergency (Often at the top of a stairwell works well, off to the side so as to not interfere with the evacuation of others).
 - Alert emergency personnel of person's location.

Assisting Persons with Mobility Limitations - Non Wheelchair Users

- Do not interfere with person's movement.
- Clear displaced and fallen obstacles from egress routes.
- If the stairs are crowded, you may act as a buffer for the person.

Assisting Persons with Limited Communication

- Look for an instruction card on the person.
- During an evacuation, give clear instructions.
- Maintain eye contact with the individual to ensure all directions are heard and understood.

Assisting Deaf or Hard of Hearing Persons

- Get the attention of the person before speaking, and look at them when speaking.
- Use facial expressions and hand gestures to communicate.
- Speak using short sentences.
- Use written notes to indicate emergency and instructions, for example, "Fire! Go out rear door now!"
- Check to be sure you are understood.
- Be patient; the person may have difficulty understanding the urgency of your message.
- Be aware that the person may not be able to hear oral commands issued by authorities.
- When out of danger, offer to make phone calls if a TTY is not available.

Assisting Persons who are Blind or have Low Vision

- During an emergency, announce your presence when entering the person's area.
- Offer your elbow; do not grab their arm or hand.
- Communicate through the evacuation by describing in advance physical barriers or action to be taken such as, "Take two steps down."

Assisting Persons with Psychological Disabilities

- Understand that the person may have difficulties in concentrating, handling stress, and initiating personal contact.
- Help reduce stress during an emergency by
 - Offering to escort the person through the evacuation.
 - Giving clear and simple instructions.

Assisting Persons with Learning Disabilities

- During an evacuation, be patient, giving instructions slowly and clearly.
- Offer to accompany them as their sense of direction may be limited.
- Encourage the person to practice their evacuation route(s) regularly.

Assisting Persons who are Developmentally Disabled

- Be aware that they may be unable to understand the emergency and could become disoriented or confused about the proper way to react.
- During an evacuation, give instructions slowly and clearly.
- Encourage the person to practice their evacuation route(s) regularly.

Assisting Persons with Medical Conditions

- Medical conditions include, for example, pregnancy, respiratory or cardiac problems.
- Offer assistance walking down stairs.
- Find ways to reduce stress, exertion, and exposure to dust or smoke.
- Remind person to bring medication or inhalers if it is safe to do so.
- Allow rest periods during evacuation if possible.

Assisting Owners of Service Animals

- Do not pet or offer food or water without the permission of the owner.
- Plan for the service animal to be evacuated with the owner.
- In the event that you are asked to handle the service animal while assisting the individual, hold the leash and not the harness if present.