



Guidance on the evacuation of persons with impaired mobility and the safe use of refuge points

Introduction

It is essential that the needs of any employee, student or visitor to University premises be taken into account when planning fire safety arrangements and evacuation procedures.

Upon notification to the Health & Safety Unit, a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) will be prepared for the individual concerned.

Under current fire safety legislation, organisations cannot rely on the emergency services to effect the evacuation and rescue of persons requiring a PEEP.

Definitions

The following terms are often used when discussing fire emergency arrangements and therefore warrant further explanation:

- **Protected Escape Route**
A protected escape route may consist of a corridor or stair enclosure which, once entered, will lead directly to a place of safety via an emergency exit. Once inside the protected escape route, you are deemed to be in a place of safety.
- **Refuge Point**
A refuge is an area normally sited within an enclosure such as a protected lobby, protected corridor or protected stairway, which provides a temporary safe area for people who will not be able to use stairways without assistance.
- **Evacuation Chair (EVAC Chair)**
Evacuation chairs are specially designed chairs for the evacuation of a person down a stair enclosure in a controlled and safe manner.

Whilst they are primarily designed for the use of wheelchair users, they can also be of assistance to those with impaired mobility, chronic / asthmatic conditions etc.

They must only be operated by person(s) trained in their use.

Actions by persons requiring assistance

It is expected that, on entering the building for the first time, a person who for any reason will require assistance:

- Should familiarise themselves with the established procedures for the building. In particular, paying attention to 'fire action notices' displayed on main exit routes throughout the building.
- Contact a member of staff to arrange for the appropriate nominated person to discuss an agreed personal emergency evacuation plan (PEEP);
- Co-operate with the agreed managerial procedures for safe evacuation in the event of fire.

Fire Emergency Procedures

The means of escape from University premises is based on the principle that members of staff, students and visitors can reach a protected escape route within a defined travel distance and within two and a half to three minutes, from where, they can proceed to the final exit in safety.

For persons requiring assistance:

The main building and the wings has a two-tier alarm system. In the event of an incident occurring the alert alarm sounders are activated (intermittent single tone alarm *in certain areas accompanied by voice instructions*)

- At this time, you should be preparing which corner staircase to go to, if in the north or south wings go to either end and have your mobile phone ready for use.
- Should it then be necessary to evacuate the building the sounder will change to the continuous two-tone alarm (*in certain areas accompanied by voice instructions*) You should then go to the nearest corner staircase.
- Once there you should telephone security, using the refuge point communicator or your mobile telephone (0121 359 2922) telling them your location. Security will tell you the location of the incident and if you are in no immediate danger they will advise you to remain where you are. If it is deemed necessary to move you to a safer area you will be advised to do so and where to go. Alternatively a Security Officer or Fire Warden will attend to take you to safety.
- In the event that you are unable to contact Security directly, ask a colleague to relay your exact location to a Security Office once outside the building.
- Should evacuation from the building be required then you will be assisted by a suitably trained person.

In any other building on the campus there are single-stage alarms which indicate the need for immediately evacuation. When this happens you are to go to the nearest staircase and proceed as above.

For persons assisting with evacuation:

Where possible, a buddy should stay with the person within the refuge point to provide morale support and avoid unnecessary panic.

People requiring assistance can be evacuated from a refuge point in a number of ways:

- Walk out themselves with limited assistance;
- Walk out with greater assistance (one or more members of staff assisting);
- In a wheelchair with limited assistance; or
- With the assistance of specialised equipment (evacuation chair).

Deciding on which method to use may depend on the following:

- The number of floors to descend;
- The availability of trained staff to assist;
- Size and suitability of the stairs.

Use of lifts:

The use of normal passenger or goods lifts should never be used as a means of evacuation in the event of a fire emergency.

Points for consideration

Consideration should be given to the needs of persons with impaired mobility including staff, students, visitors and contractors. Some disabilities can be less obvious than others and staff should be vigilant to the needs of others, especially during an emergency situation.

With a number of individuals, their impaired mobility may only be temporary. Members of staff in advanced stages of pregnancy or those with broken limbs will only be temporarily affected.

If you require a PEEP or know someone who does, please make contact with the University Fire Safety Adviser. Details below:

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Fire Safety Adviser
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