

# **Emergency Evacuation Guidelines For Persons With Disabilities**

*The content of this document is for informational purposes only.  
It is not intended for medical or legal advice.*

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## **Developing a Plan for an Evacuation**

Knowledge and preparation by both persons with disabilities and persons without disabilities is key to reducing the impact of emergency disasters. When developing a plan, the safety needs of persons with disabilities (PWD) should be determined on a case-by-case basis because they vary with each individual and building. **PWD utilizing NC State's campus are asked to take responsibility in developing their personal emergency evacuation plans.** The Chief Deputy Fire Marshal and the ADA Coordinator will assist in the development and execution of plans.

### **Confidentiality**

If you wish to develop an evacuation plan or discuss developing a plan with someone with a disability and are concerned about confidentiality, it is recommended that

- If you are a student, faculty, or staff member with a disability, contact the Disability Services for Office, Suite 1900, Student Health Center. 515-7653 (voice) or 515-8830 (TTY).
- If you wish to assist a person with a disability, contact the ADA Coordinator, Dr. Cheryl Branker, at 513-3768.

### **Tips for Developing a Plan**

- Make two plans - 1) for when in the company of others and 2) for when alone.
- Ask others for input, such as resident hall directors, faculty, supervisors, and co-workers.
- Contact the Chief Deputy Fire Marshal for evacuation information, such as identified areas of refuge and where evacuation equipment is available.
- Choose two evacuation routes for each building (see "Evacuation Options").
- Set up a buddy system (see "Buddy System")
- Do not consider using elevators in plan.

- Consider alternative carry and/or communication methods if necessary.
- Think about your needs for preparedness kits, for example, disability related equipment, communication devices, service animal food, and three days worth of medication if applicable.
- Have a list of all your medications (name, dose, frequency, and name of doctor).
- Attach written instructions to all disability related equipment.
- Consider using door/window markers so emergency personnel will know your location.
- Adopt the rule to contact Campus Police when in buildings after hours.
- Have easy access to emergency contact information at all times.
- Participate in drills and review effectiveness of plan.
- Share individual plans for a building with Campus Police and key persons who regularly work or live in the building.

### **Buddy System**

- Buddies need to be willing and capable of assisting in an evacuation.
- PWD and buddy must be able to contact each other quickly.
- Assign at least two buddies.
- PWD should train buddies when plan completed.

### **Evacuation Options**

Horizontal Evacuation: Use building exits to the outside ground level or that go into unaffected wings of multi-building complexes.

Stairway Evacuation: Use stairs to reach ground level exits.

Area of Refuge: Usually the safest area of refuge is an enclosed stairwell. Vestibules adjacent to exit stairs and open air exit balconies are also potential locations. Go to an area of refuge with a "buddy," if possible, away from obvious danger.

Stay in Place: (In sprinkler protected buildings only or if an area of refuge is not available.) Unless danger is imminent, remain in a

room with an exterior window, a telephone, and a solid or fire resistant door.

## **Tips for Persons With Disabilities**

### **General Guidelines – For an Emergency**

- Obtain the disaster supplies kit that has been prepared ahead of time.
- Follow basic emergency safety guidelines
- Call emergency personnel if possible.
- Determine need to evacuate or stay in place.
- If evacuating, inform emergency personnel of area headed to and type of assistance needed.
- If unable to contact emergency personnel, move to planned designated area.
- Ask others to notify emergency personnel of need for assistance.
- If trapped, get the attention of others by calling out or striking objects together to make noise.
- If not in immediate danger, stay in place or move to area of refuge until emergency personnel determine nature of the situation.

A person with a disability may not have to evacuate for false alarms or isolated and contained fires. The Campus Police/Fire Protection will decide to evacuate or not and will tell the individual their decision.

The following are suggestions for specific disabilities in addition to the general guidelines listed above.

### **Tips for Persons who use Wheelchairs**

- Preparedness kits should include:
  - Heavy gloves for making your way over glass or debris.
  - Extra battery for electric wheelchairs.
  - Patch kit for punctured wheels.
- Store a lightweight manual wheelchair, if available.
- Arrange and secure furniture and other items to provide barrier free paths of travel.
- In tornadoes and hurricanes once in a safe and protected place, lock wheels, bend over your knees and cover your head.
- If a small stair landing is chosen as the area of refuge, consider waiting until heavy traffic has passed before entering.
- If you are in bed or out of your wheelchair, seek cover under the bed, a desk, or a table.

## **Tips for Deaf or Hard of Hearing Individuals**

- Preparedness kits should include:
  - Pen and paper and a flashlight to communicate in the dark.
  - Extra hearing aid batteries.
  - Batteries for TTY and light phone signaler.
- Install both audible and visual smoke alarms in your office and home.
- Be careful of falling things as you leave a building.

## **Tips for Persons who are Blind or have Low Vision**

- When preparing your evacuation plan ask for needed information in alternate formats if needed, such as building evacuation instructions.
- Know where the nearest telephones and alarm boxes are located.
- Know how to describe your location.
- Disaster supplies kit should include:
  - Extra folding white cane.
  - Heavy gloves for feeling your way over glass or debris.
  - Colored cape or poncho worn for visibility by others.
- Know where nearby emergency medical kits are located.
- Mark emergency supplies with large print or Braille, if helpful.
- Make sure evacuation signage is adequately marked for your needs.
- Practice your evacuation route periodically both with your service animal and white cane.
- Be cautious of obstructions and falling objects during a tornado and hurricane.

## **Tips for Persons with a Service Animal**

- Include instructions in your plan for service animals.
- Some dogs fear metal grated steps. If your evacuation route has these kinds of steps, get your dog accustomed to the route.
- If the only stair rail is on your left side where a service dog should typically be, accustom the dog to heeling down the right side if you do not intend to work the dog on the steps.
- Be cautioned that if a dog typically stops at each new flight others behind you may panic. Heeling the dog may be safer in some instances.

## **Tips for Persons with Learning Disabilities**

- When making your plan for evacuation,
  - Ask for information in alternate formats if needed.
  - Review general building evacuation guidelines and ask questions if you do not understand something.
- See if your evacuation routes have signage that is easy to follow.
- Ask someone to guide you during an evacuation if you feel you need help.

- Ask someone to write down information if you have a hard time understanding oral directions.
- Practice your evacuation route(s) regularly, such as every two weeks or at least monthly.

### **Tips for Persons with Limited Communication**

- Determine how you will best communicate with others during an emergency.
- Consider having evacuation and emergency instructions written down on a card, carried at all times, and placed in an easy view location.
- Have batteries for communication equipment in preparedness kit.

### **Tips for Persons with Psychological Disabilities**

- Preparedness kit should include at least three days worth of needed medication.
- When developing plan, consider strategies to reduce stress of the emergency by
  - Identifying areas of refuge that have two-way communication devices.
  - Making sure directional signage for exits and designated area of refuge in your planned evacuation route is adequate enough to assist you.

### **Tips for Persons with Developmental Disabilities**

- When you plan for an evacuation,
  - Review general building evacuation guidelines and ask questions if you do not understand something.
  - Request evacuation and emergency information in alternate formats if needed.
- Make sure that your evacuation routes have signage that is easy to follow.
- Ask someone to guide you during an evacuation if you feel you need help.
- Practice your evacuation route(s) regularly, such as every two weeks.

### **Tips for Persons with Medical Conditions**

- Medical conditions include, for example, pregnancy, respiratory or cardiac problems.
- Ask for assistance walking down stairs.
- Remember to bring medication or inhalers when evacuating.
- Consider taking rest periods during evacuation if possible.

# **Assisting Persons with Disabilities in an Evacuation**

## **General Guidelines**

- Assign office, class, and event locations, if possible, in most accessible locations.
- Ensure egress routes and areas of refuge are always clear and properly marked.
- Participate in and help identify gaps in evacuation plans during practice drills.
- Respect that the person with the disability may be the best authority on how to be evacuated.
- Provide adequate notice that a potential danger exists and that evacuation should begin.
- Offer assistance but let the person explain what help is needed.
- Carrying a person is not advisable except in the most extreme of circumstances.
- 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.

The following are some specific suggestions that may provide additional assistance for specific disabilities.

## **Assisting Persons who Use Wheelchairs**

- Be familiar with designated areas of refuge and location of evacuation equipment for wheelchair users.
- If the person is unable to speak clearly, look for a sign on the chair with printed instructions.
- Only in situations of extreme danger should untrained people attempt to carry a person in a wheelchair.
- 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.
  - 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.

### **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 insure all directions are heard and understood.

### **Assisting Deaf or Hard of Hearing Persons**

- Provide the person with a flashlight from their preparedness kit so they can signal their location and to help with lip reading in the dark.
- Get 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**

- In the planning phase,
  - Offer emergency information in an accessible format.
  - Provide orientation to building evacuation routes and pull alarm locations.
- 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**

- Make sure exits and safe areas are clearly marked prior to an emergency.
- 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 the planning phase,
  - Offer to provide information in alternative formats.
  - Provide adequate signage with simple symbols and review with them for understanding.
- When developing printed emergency materials, review to insure easy "readability."
- 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.
- Prior to an emergency, make sure designated emergency routes are marked with signage that communicates with color and symbols rather than words.
- 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.
- 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.

## **Campus Resource Contact Information**

**ADA Coordinator**

Suite 1900, Student Health Services

513-3768

**Campus Police**

Field House

515-3000

**Disability Services Office**

Suite 1900, Student Health Services

515-7653

**Environmental Health & Safety**

1150 Varsity Drive

515-7915

**Fire Protection**

Field House

515-2568

**Student Health Services**

2815 Cates Avenue

515-2563