

## Evacuation of Persons with Disabilities

### POLICY

Persons with disabilities and persons who work or live in proximity to persons with disabilities must plan for emergency evacuation in the event of a fire or other emergency. This section provides:

- Requirements and guidelines for evacuating persons with disabilities (see [During and Emergency](#)).
- Guidelines and requirements for preparing for emergency evacuations of persons with disabilities (see [Preparation for Emergencies](#)).

### Training

The responsible department must provide training and education addressing emergency procedures for persons with disabilities and other students, faculty, and staff who reside and work in proximity to persons with disabilities. The department of Public Safety coordinates such training; telephone 509-335-8548. This training is to be done in person but may include training aids, e.g., film, videotape. The WSU Fire Marshal provides information concerning a first-aid course that includes emergency procedures for persons with disabilities.

Hiring units should instruct new and existing employees to inform supervisors if they become disabled, even temporarily, so that evacuation procedures can be reviewed. Co-workers should become familiar with their responsibilities in ensuring such employees are properly accommodated during an evacuation or emergency.

### DURING AN EMERGENCY

In an emergency, all building occupants are to proceed outside to a designated emergency assembly area. Persons who are unable to evacuate are to proceed to areas of refuge located in the building (see [Area of Refuge](#)).

Areas of refuge are wheelchair-accessible locations on each floor of University buildings. Identifying signs are located at each door providing access to the areas (see [Signage Requirements](#)).

During an emergency:

- Check on people with special needs.

People with disabilities may require assistance from other occupants and/or fire personnel to exit safely. An individual who can safely assist a person with a disability is obligated to do so.

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**DURING AN EMERGENCY (cont.)** • Always *ask* someone with a disability how you can help *before* attempting any rescue technique or giving assistance. Ask how he or she can best be assisted or moved, and whether there are any special considerations or items that need to come with the person (see [Assistance Considerations](#)).

### Do Not Use Elevators

In the event of an emergency notification to evacuate, evacuees must not use building elevators. Elevator access areas are signed, "In Case of Fire Do Not Use Elevator, Use Stairway." In most University buildings, upon activation of the fire alarm system, the elevators are called to the ground or alternate floor (usually one floor above or below the primary floor). Elevators are thus available for fire department use only.

### Stairwells

Stairwells are the safest means of escape if free from smoke, flames, or toxic gases.

### If Unable to Evacuate

Evacuees must seek an area of refuge if exits are unusable due to smoke, flame, or gases, and the person with a disability is unable to exit safely (see [Area of Refuge](#)). Public Safety advises persons able to use the exit stairway to do so as soon as possible, unless they are assisting others.

### Notify Police or Fire Personnel

Evacuees must notify police or fire personnel immediately of any people remaining in the building and their locations.

Police or fire personnel decide whether people are safe where they are and evacuate them as necessary. The WSU Fire Marshal or the local area fire department may override the rule against using elevators in order to evacuate people.

## Assistance Considerations

### Blindness or Visual Impairment

The following special considerations apply to assisting persons with blindness or visual impairment:

- *Do not* grasp a visually impaired person's arm. Ask if he or she would like to hold onto your arm as you exit, especially if there is debris or a crowd.
- Give verbal instructions about the evacuation route using estimated distances and directional terms (e.g., twenty feet forward, turn right).
- Give other verbal instructions or information (e.g., elevators cannot be used, any obstacles).

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### Deafness or Hearing Loss

The following special considerations apply to assisting persons with deafness or hearing loss:

- Get the attention of a person with a hearing disability by touch and eye contact. Clearly state the problem. Gestures and pointing are helpful, but be prepared to write a brief statement if the person does not seem to understand.
- Offer visual instructions to advise of safest route or direction by pointing toward exits or evacuation maps.

### Mobility Impairment

The following special considerations apply to assisting persons with mobility impairment:

- Clear the exit route if necessary to enable the person with a disability to move to a safer area.
- Move to an area of refuge, e.g., a classroom, an office with the door shut, if unable to exit from the building (see [Area of Refuge](#)).
- If the person with a mobility impairment is in immediate danger and cannot be moved to an area of refuge to wait for assistance, evacuate him or her using an evacuation chair or a carry technique as needed.

An evacuation chair is a device designed to enable a small person to easily move a larger, mobility-impaired passenger down stairs with full control of the speed of descent. The open-sided design allows a person with limited mobility to transfer from a wheelchair to the evacuation chair.

### Rescue Evacuation

Attempt a rescue evacuation *only* if you have had rescue training or the person is in immediate danger and cannot wait for professional assistance.

### Power Outage

If a power outage occurs during the day, people may choose to wait in the building for electricity to be restored.

People staying in the building during a power outage are to:

- Move near a window where there is natural light and access to a working telephone.
- During regular building hours, notify the safety committee so committee members can advise emergency personnel.

## **Evacuation of Persons with Disabilities**

### **Pullman Campus**

If a power outage occurs during the day and people with disabilities would like to leave, or if the power outage occurs at night, call the Whitman County Communications Center (WHITCOM) at 911 from a campus telephone. Request evacuation assistance from the WSU Fire Marshal.

NOTE: Some multi-button campus telephones may not operate during a power outage. Single-line telephones and pay telephones are likely to be operating. As soon as information is available, the Pullman campus emergency information line provides a recorded message stating when power is likely to be restored; telephone 509-335-7777.

### **Non-Pullman Campuses**

If a power outage occurs during the day and people with disabilities like to leave, or if the power outage occurs at night, call the disabilities campus or local police department at 911 or the local emergency response telephone number. Request evacuation assistance from the campus or local fire department.

NOTE: Some multi-button campus telephones may not operate during a power outage. Single-line telephones and pay telephones are likely to be operating.

### **Smoke**

If smoke begins to invade the area of refuge, occupants should attempt to cover cracks or openings around doors, windows, and other openings, e.g., ventilation grills and utility penetrations, with cloth (preferably wet) or duct tape if possible. If smoke continues to invade, occupants should place a cloth (preferably wet) over the mouth and nose to filter smoke and to improve air exchange.

If possible, an occupant of an area of refuge should hang an article of cloth out of the window to identify the refuge location to rescuers.

Area of refuge occupants should not panic. Help will arrive!

### **Priorities**

The first fire engine and personnel immediately begin to fight the fire. If the fire is extinguished, the danger is quickly mitigated. If the fire continues to grow, the danger escalates.

Subsequently-arriving fire companies conduct necessary rescue activities.

## **Evacuation of Persons with Disabilities**

### **PREPARATION FOR EMERGENCIES**

#### **Assistance Volunteers**

Departments may choose to establish a *buddy system*. Using a buddy system, people with disabilities arrange for volunteers (co-workers/neighbors) to alert them and assist them in an emergency.

#### **Evacuation Chair**

Each work unit, office, and/or department should identify employees and regular visitors who could need assistance evacuating the building using an evacuation chair. An evacuation chair is a device designed to enable a single person to easily move a mobility-impaired passenger down the stairs.

University central administration recommends that, as resources permit, the work unit purchase an evacuation chair meeting Purchasing Services' criteria. Store the chair near the work area. Place signs clearly indicating the chair storage location.

Work units may choose to coordinate with other units located in the same building to purchase evacuation chairs. University central administration recommends at least one evacuation chair be located in each building, with more purchased as needed.

#### **Area of Refuge**

In most cases, an area of refuge is used for persons with disabilities who are not able to evacuate the building. However, depending on the type of emergency, this area may be used for all people occupying a particular floor within a building.

Each work unit is to designate at least one wheelchair-accessible area of refuge location on each floor of the building the unit occupies.

**EXCEPTION:** Areas of refuge are not required for ground floors.

A work unit may choose to coordinate with other units located on the same floor in a building to designate areas of refuge. University central administration recommends that units designate a primary and secondary area of refuge on each floor above the ground floor to provide as much temporary safety as possible.

For assistance with determining the location of areas of refuge in a building, contact the WSU Fire Marshal or the local area fire department for a building survey.

## **Evacuation of Persons with Disabilities**

### **Physical Requirements**

Areas of refuge are to:

- Be located on each floor above the ground level.
- Have direct access to a stairway.
- Be sized to accommodate at least one wheelchair space, not less than 30 inches by 48 inches.

NOTE: Wheelchair spaces must not reduce the required exit width or interfere with access to or use of fire department hose connections and valves.

- Have a closed door to keep smoke and flames out until the fire department arrives.

It is preferred that each area of refuge be separated from the remainder of the story by a smoke barrier having at least a one-hour fire-resistance rating.

- Be provided with a two-way communication system such as a working public telephone or a cell phone.

### **Signage Requirements**

Units must identify each area of refuge, regardless of location, with a sign stating: AREA OF REFUGE. The international symbol of accessibility and tactile signage are to be included on the sign. The sign is to be located at each door providing access to the area of refuge.

Units are to post instructions on the emergency use of the area. The instructions must include all of the following:

- Directions to other exits.
- Recommendation to persons able to use the exit stairway to do so as soon as possible, unless they are assisting others.
- Information on stairway assistance or supervised operation of elevators. Include instructions for summoning such assistance.
- Directions for use of the emergency communications system.

### **Administrative Notification**

To facilitate the evacuation of persons with disabilities, units are to notify the following administrative personnel or groups of the location of chosen areas of refuge, as indicated.

**Evacuation of Persons with Disabilities***WSU Pullman*

WSU Pullman work units are to notify the Space Allocation Manager, Facilities Services, Capital, of the area of refuge locations on each floor above the ground level in buildings the units occupy.

The Space Allocation Manager reviews and submits this information to the WSU Fire Marshal.

*WSU Spokane*

WSU Spokane work units are to contact the WSU Spokane Security Office; telephone 509-358-7995 or #40; or the local police department to determine the area of refuge locations on each floor above the ground level in buildings the units occupy.

The WSU Spokane Security Office reviews and finalizes this information with the Spokane Fire Department. The Security Office notifies the Space Allocation Manager, Facilities Services, Capital, of the chosen area of refuge locations.

*WSU Tri-Cities*

WSU Tri-Cities work units are to notify WSU Tri-Cities Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S) of the area of refuge locations on each floor above the ground level in buildings the units occupy.

WSU Tri-Cities EH&S reviews and finalizes this information with Benton/Franklin County Emergency Services and submits the chosen area of refuge locations to the Space Allocation Manager, Facilities Services, Capital.

*WSU Vancouver*

WSU Vancouver work units are to notify WSU Vancouver Public Safety of the area of refuge locations on each floor above the ground level in buildings the units occupy.

WSU Vancouver Public Safety reviews and finalizes this information with the Vancouver Fire Department and submits the chosen area of refuge locations to the Space Allocation Manager, Facilities Services, Capital.

*Research and Cooperative Extension Units*

Research and cooperative extension units are to notify the Associate Dean, College of Agricultural, Human, and Natural Resource Sciences (CAHNRS), of the areas of refuge on each floor above the ground level in buildings the units occupy.

The Associate Dean, CAHNRS, gathers and submits this information to the Space Allocation Manager, Facilities Services, Capital. The Space Allocation Manager reviews and submits this information to the local area fire departments.