

**Services to Students with Disabilities
Disaster Emergency Preparedness Plan
For People with Disabilities**

GUIDELINES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN EMERGENCIES

Evacuation of people with disabilities will be given high priority in all emergencies. In an emergency situation, it is important that you are familiar with your needs during evacuation. You are encouraged to convey these needs to your instructor at the beginning of each semester. While attending class, try to position yourself near a doorway for an easier exit. Become familiar with the building and its exits. Follow signs to exits. The following guidelines are important to follow:

- Establish a buddy system and alternate for each class. People with disabilities should prepare for an emergency ahead of time by instructing a classmate, instructor, supervisor, or co-worker on how to assist in the event of any emergency.
- If assistance is not immediately available, disabled people should remain near the stairwell landing or in the elevator lobby. Rescue personnel will first check all exit corridors and stairwells for those trapped. S/He should continue to call for help until rescued.
- People who cannot speak loudly, or with voice / speech impairments, should carry a whistle or have other means of attracting attention of others.
- Be familiar with alarm signals.
- Leave school materials in the room to avoid wasting time.
- Wait for rescue and remain calm.
- DO NOT re-enter a building until permitted by emergency personnel.

If you suspect a fire is behind a door; cover your hand to provide protection, first and then test the door by touching it. If it is hot then do NOT use the door as an exit. Try to find an alternate route for an exit.

A cautionary note on elevators: Do NOT use elevators unless authorized to do so by police or fire personnel. Elevators could fail during a fire, earthquake or flood.

EVACUATION POLICY FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

The campus community should familiarize themselves with these procedures in order to assist in planning for the evacuation of people with physical and sensory disabilities.

IN ALL EMERGENCIES, AFTER AN EVACUATION HAS BEEN ORDERED:

- Evacuation of people with disabilities will be given high priority in all emergencies and will be evacuated if possible. Evacuating a disabled or injured person by only one person with no assistance is a last resort.
- Attempt a rescue evacuation ONLY if you have had rescue training.
- Check on people with special needs during an evacuation, determine if they have established a “buddy system,” and ensure their safe evacuation.
- 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.
- If the situation is life threatening, call 9-1-1.
- Do NOT use elevators, unless authorized to do so by police or fire personnel. Elevators could fail during a fire, earthquake or flood.

BLINDNESS OR VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

- Most visually impaired persons will be familiar with the immediate area they are in and may have learned locations of exits and fire alarms in advance.
- Tell the person the nature of the emergency and offer to guide him/her by offering your left/right elbow (this is the preferred method when acting as a “Sighted Guide”). Do NOT grasp a visually impaired person’s arm.
- Give verbal instructions to advise about the safest route or direction using compass directions, estimated distances, and directional terms or information (i.e., elevators cannot be used or if there is debris or a crowd.)
- As you walk, tell the person where you are and advise of any obstacles, e.g. stairs, overhanging objects, uneven pavement, curbs, and narrow passageways.
- When you have reached safety, orient the person to where he/she is and ask if any further assistance is needed.
- Some individuals may have Guide Dogs that may be disoriented during the emergency, and may require additional assistance.
- White canes and other mobility aids should NOT be left behind.

DEAFNESS OR HEARING LOSS

- Buildings on the CSU Long Beach campus are equipped with visual (flashing light) as well as auditory evacuation alarms. However, persons with impaired hearing may not perceive an emergency exists. Where anyone appears to not be recognizing an alarm is sounding/flashing an alternative warning technique is required. Two alternative methods of warning are:
 - Write a note stating what the emergency is and what the evacuation route is i.e. “Fire – go out the rear door to Parking Lot”.
 - Turn the room lights on and off to gain attention – then indicate through hand gestures or writing (i.e. on a blackboard) what is happening and where to go.
- Offer visual instructions to advice of safest route or directions by pointing toward exits or evacuation map.
- People who cannot speak loudly, or with voice/speech impairments, may be carrying a whistle or have other means of attracting attention of others.

MOBILITY IMPAIRMENTS

- Mobility-impaired persons should NOT be evacuated by untrained personnel unless the situation is life-threatening. It may be necessary to help clear the exit route of debris (if possible) so that the person with a disability can move out or to a safer area.
- If people with mobility Impairments cannot exit, they should move to a safer area, most enclosed stairwells, or an office with the door shut which is a good distance from the hazard (and away from falling debris in the case of earthquakes.)
- Notify emergency responders immediately about any people remaining in the building and their locations.
- If people are in immediate danger and cannot be moved to a safer area, it may be necessary, only if you have had rescue training, to evacuate them using an evacuation chair or a carry technique. Carrying options include using a two-person lock-arm position, or having the person sit in a sturdy chair – preferably with arms, or using an evacuation chair.

PEOPLE USING CRUTCHES, CANES OR WALKERS

- The same procedures outlined for the Mobility Impaired should be used. Crutches, canes and walkers should NOT be left behind.

NON-AMBULATORY

- ❑ Most non-ambulatory people will be able to exit safely without assistance out of single story buildings.
- ❑ All 2+ story buildings will require persons to be carried out. If evacuation assistance is required, always ask the person what method of assistance they prefer. Some people have minimal ability to move and lifting them may be dangerous to their well being. If the person prefers to be moved in their wheelchair the wheelchair user will be carried facing away from the stairs.
- ❑ Some people have no upper trunk or neck strength to assist in being carried out. If a seatbelt is available, secure the person if use of a chair is the method employed to carry the person to safety.
- ❑ If moving a person more than three (3) flights, a “relay team” arrangement is needed. If a wheelchair is left behind, do NOT leave it in an exit path or doorway to become an obstacle.
- ❑ Wheelchairs have many movable weak parts which were not constructed to withstand the stress of lifting (e.g., the seat bar, footplates, wheels, movable armrests).
- ❑ Frequently, non-ambulatory persons have respiratory complications or rely on electric artificial respirators. They should be given priority assistance if there is smoke or fumes, as their ability to breathe is seriously in danger.
- ❑ Power wheelchairs may have heavy batteries, which are difficult to remove. In this situation, the best response may be to ask the person to transfer to an evacuation chair, if one is available, so that they can be moved immediately. If it is not possible for the person to be removed from the chair (i.e., if the person uses respiratory equipment that is attached to the chair), wait for assistance. If attempting to move a power wheelchair, remove the batteries. Make sure the footrests are locked, the motor is off, and it is in neutral gear. Some power wheelchairs and scooters may not have heavy battery packs, and may be moved with little difficulty.

- ❑ If the person prefers to be removed from their wheelchair, their needs and preferences will vary. Always consult the person as to his/her preference with regards to:
 - Ways of being removed from a wheelchair
 - The number of people needed for assistance
 - Whether to extend or move extremities when lifting because of pain, catheter leg bags, spasticity, braces, etc.
 - If a seat cushion or pad should be brought along with him/her if he/she is removed from the wheelchair.
 - Being carried forward to backward on a flight of stairs.
 - After-care. If a person is removed from the wheelchair (i.e., a stretcher, chair with cushion pad, or car seat) perhaps paramedic assistance might be needed.

- ❑ The person will want their wheelchair retrieved as soon as possible. The wheelchair is essential to the person's mobility and should be given a high priority to be retrieved as soon as possible. Inform the University Police of the location of wheelchairs to be retrieved.

POWER OUTAGES

- ❑ If an outage occurs during the day and people with disabilities choose to wait in the building for electricity to be restored, they can move near a window where there is natural light and access to a working telephone. During regular building hours, a Building Marshal, Disabled Students Services, or the University Police should be notified.

- ❑ If people would like to leave and an evacuation has been ordered, or if the outage occurs at night, call University Police at 985-4101 from a campus telephone to request evacuation assistance.

- ❑ On campus phones should continue to operate in the event of a power failure, however there may be no power to the display or lighting functions.

EMERGENCY EVACUATION TIPS AND OVERVIEW

Evacuation is difficult and uncomfortable for both the rescuers and the people being assisted. Some people have conditions that can be aggravated or triggered if they are moved incorrectly. Remember that environmental conditions (smoke, debris, loss of electricity) will complicate evacuation efforts.

The following guidelines are general and may not apply in every circumstance.

- Occupants should be invited to volunteer ahead of time to assist disabled people in an emergency. If a volunteer is not available, designate someone to assist who is willing to accept the responsibility.
- Volunteers should obtain evacuation training for certain types of lifting techniques through the Office of Safety and Risk Management in coordination with the Disabled Student Services Center.
- Two or more trained volunteers, if available, should conduct the evacuation and relay teams established if the evacuation is more than three flights.
- Always ASK disabled people how you can help BEFORE attempting any rescue technique or giving assistance. Ask how they can best be assisted or moved, and if there are any special considerations or items that need to come with them. Lifting a person may be harmful. Ask their preference about being carried forward or backward down a flight of stairs. Ask whether a seat cushion or pad should be brought along. Wheelchairs were not designed to handle the stress of lifting. Batteries may have to be removed and life support equipment could be connected.
- Before attempting an evacuation, volunteers and people being assisted should discuss how any lifting will be done and where they are going,
- Proper lifting techniques (e.g., bending the knees, keeping the back straight, holding the person close before lifting, and using leg muscles to lift) should be used to avoid injury to rescuers' backs. Ask permission of the evacuee if an evacuation chair or similar device is being considered as an aid in an evacuation. When using such devices, make sure the person is secured properly. Rest at landings if necessary.
- Certain lifts may need to be modified depending on a person's disability.
- Persons who must be taken out of the wheelchair to be transported can be carried by:
 - Pack-Strap Carry: Initiate the technique at the top of a flight of stairs where the carrier can use the handrail for support in lifting.
 - If the student has no arm strength or is less than half the carrier's weight, use the "cradle", similar to the technique used when picking up a small child.
- A straight back chair or evacuation chair requires at least three strong people are available who can control the chair (if the person agrees to this method).

SUMMARY

Prepare occupants in your building ahead of time for emergency evacuations. Know your building occupants. Train staff, faculty, and students to be aware of the needs of people with disabilities and to know how to offer assistance. Hold evacuation drills in which occupants participate, and evaluate drills to identify areas that need improvement. Develop plans that cover regular working hours, after hours, and weekends. Everyone needs to take responsibility for preparing for emergencies. People with abilities should consider what they would do and whether they need to take additional steps to prepare.

At alarm, options are:

- In an extreme emergency, leave the building immediately and notify emergency personnel of a disabled person needing assistance.
- In a moderate emergency, help the disabled person to your department's area of safe refuge assembly point, leave the building, and notify emergency personnel of a disabled person needing assistance.
- Assist the disabled person to evacuate.