

## **General Guidance for Emergency Egress**

Advice and support for writing a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) is available from the OHES Department and the Inclusion Team.

It is essential that people requiring assistance are escorted/guided to a place of safety outside the building. In assisting those persons with visual or mobility disabilities, it may be more appropriate to avoid the main rush of evacuees when exiting the building and to follow after the main flow has passed. This is likely to mean that those people requiring assistance will have to wait fractionally longer to evacuate, but this will prevent possible injuries occurring to those persons who require assistance and to other people evacuating.

### **Temporary Refuge**

A temporary refuge is a designated safe area where disabled people can wait for assistance prior to further evacuation. In the majority of the University's buildings, with the exception of Gray's School of Art and the Scott Sutherland Building, all staircases are fire and smoke protected for a period of 60 minutes when the doors are closed. Therefore, to aid assistance of disabled persons, a PEEP can utilise these protected staircases to enable a staged evacuation to take place. It is therefore likely that a PEEP will make use of protected stairways to increase the time available for evacuation. All refuges are equipped with communication systems that are linked to a control panel which will allow communication with either the incident controller or another responsible person. It will be important to ensure that there is a safe route to the refuge.

### **Lifts**

There are two fire-fighting lifts provided in Riverside East, lift NSL08 in the library tower and NSL10 in the north east end of the building. These lifts have features which may allow their use in the event of a fire. When the fire alarm activates, these lifts will return to the fire service access level and park. Once this happens it is not possible to call the lifts, by use of a landing button, as the lift is only operable from inside the car by use of a key. The lift control will ultimately be handed over to the Fire and Rescue Service for their use. The fire-fighting lifts may therefore only be used by RGU in the early stage of the evacuation process then later in agreement with the Fire and Rescue Service.

The other lifts within the University are not designated as "evacuation" or "fire-fighting" lifts and are not suitable for fire evacuation purposes. Apart from the two fire-fighting lifts in Riverside East the University lifts should be not be used in an emergency situation.

### **Safe Routes**

During the development of a PEEP, the details of the routes that the disabled persons is expected to use will need to be clarified. The evacuation routes should preferably be horizontal to reduce the need for disabled people to navigate stairs. If the PEEP requires the provision of

clear unobstructed gangways then there may be a need to have procedures in place to ensure that these gangways remain clear at all times. It is important to ensure that doors and closing devices are all able to be operated by the evacuating persons. Consideration will have to be given to alternative evacuation routes and that those routes are suitable.

### **Evacuation Aids**

Strategically located within fire protected stairways are evacuation chairs which can be used to assist disabled people downstairs. In addition, there are a number of stair-climbing devices which will allow limited movement upstairs. Potential users of these devices generally self-transfer into the chairs and they are then assisted down (or up) the stairs.

Consideration will have to be given to those people who cannot transfer or the process of transferring would have a detrimental effect on their health. Alternative arrangements will have to be implemented. Some wheelchair users may, understandably, be unhappy about being moved in an evacuation chair. Some of this anxiety can be addressed by having a person walking in front of the chair whilst descending the stairs.

It is essential that those persons expected to use evacuation aids receive adequate training and are encouraged to routinely practice use of these aids. All site supervisors are currently trained to enable them to train other staff members in the use of evacuation chairs.

## **Guidance for Particular Disabilities**

In determining the appropriate assistance to aid the evacuation of the disabled person, it has to be stressed that the needs and concerns of the disabled person are taken into consideration prior to implementing any measures. It is therefore important to discuss the proposed PEEP with the disabled person. Below is some basic guidance for visual, hearing and physical disabilities. Further in-depth advice can be sought from the Inclusion Team or the OHES Department.

### **Visual Disability**

People with a visual disability will be able to hear the fire alarm, but it is expected that orientation training will be required to ensure that they can find your way out of the building in a prompt manner. Orientation must include alternative exit routes from all the buildings that they will be visiting. If a guide dog is used, it will be important to ensure that both the person and their dog are given ample opportunity to learn these routes. It may be that the person may wish to retain their guide dog during the evacuation process; however some people may wish to give responsibility of the dog to another person. It is important to take their wishes into consideration during the development of the PEEP. Note that a completely blind person may require assistance at all points during the evacuation.

### **Hearing Disability**

For the majority of the time that deaf or hearing disabled people are working with hearing colleagues/students they will not require special equipment as long as they have been informed, using the appropriate

media, of the procedures to take in the event of a fire. In these situations they will be able to see and comprehend the behaviour of their colleagues/students.

When working alone, it will be necessary to ensure that they can be notified of the activation of the fire alarm. This can be achieved by the use of flashing alarms or alternatively the Deaf Alerter system can be used. This is in operation in all University buildings and a pager can be borrowed from the reception areas. If a person is completely deaf, they may have their own Deaf Alerter.

### **Physical Disability**

If the person has a disability which does not require assistance to enable them to exit the building, but does however slow their progress, it is recommended that in the event of a fire alarm activation they proceed, or are assisted if appropriate, to a protected stairway and wait until the main flow of people have passed before proceeding downstairs to the exit. This is to ensure their safety in ensuring that they do not contribute to an accident on the stairs to themselves or others. Once in the protected stairway they will be protected for a minimum of 60 minutes. If required, the communication system installed in the refuges can be used to contact the incident controller or deputy.

If a disabled person requires assistance to evacuate consideration should be given to

- introducing a "buddy system" to accompany the person to a refuge/safe area
- travelling at a rate that is comfortable to the disabled person

For wheelchair users consideration should be given to

- identification of the location of safe refuges and communication systems
- whether the wheelchair user can reach the refuge unaided – if not consider a buddy system
- identification of the best method of egress and if there is a need for specialised equipment (Evac-chair)