

EVACUATION OF DISABLED PEOPLE

(Document under constant review)



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1. INTRODUCTION

The introduction of The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 requires that employers or organisations providing services to the public, take responsibility for all people, including disabled people evacuating buildings safely.

When an employer or a service provider does not make provisions for the safe evacuation of disabled people from its premises, this may be viewed as discrimination.

It is a general requirement that emergency procedures are pre-planned and that planning should have regard to the needs of all occupants. It is therefore essential to identify the needs of disabled people and, where necessary, to make proper arrangements for their assistance in the event of an emergency evacuation.

This guidance note will not determine which procedure should be adopted in any particular circumstances. The procedure will vary as to the needs of the disabled person, their relationship to the building they occupy and its structural characteristics.

The University encourages disabled staff and students to make themselves known. This is to enable their safety during an emergency procedure is given the highest priority. This declaration should be encouraged at registration for students and final interview stage for staff. This is especially important in situations where there is sleeping in arrangements e.g. halls of residence.

2. PLANNING AN EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The following issues need to be considered when planning an evacuation procedure for disabled people:

- Identify the number of disabled staff and students and where they will be in the building
- Implement Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (see 3)
- Consult with relevant staff and students
- The evacuation plan should not rely upon the intervention of the Fire and Rescue Services to make it work.
- Consider the characteristics of the building
- Assess the evacuation equipment disabled people will need
- Train your staff to deal with emergency evacuations
- Determine what needs to happen when the alarm goes off
- Identify what needs to be done when it is not possible to evacuate disabled people
- Use enclosed ladder diagram to help construct a PEEP (see appendices)

3. PERSONAL EMERGENCY EVACUATION PLAN (PEEP)

The purpose of a PEEP is firstly to secure the safety of the named individual in the event of a building evacuation. The PEEP will also record the safety plan e.g. routes, corridors, stairs or refuges etc, identify those persons who will assist carrying out the evacuation and training or practice needs.

Where identified within the PEEP that assistance is required to carry out the evacuation, faculties, schools or departments must be assured that the people identified within the plan are in place.

Considerations should be given to timetabling and room location of the disabled person. Room location as near to the ground floor as possible for quick evacuation should be considered.

Faculties, Schools or Departments must construct a PEEP when aware that staff, students or visitors may experience difficulties in responding to a building emergency evacuation alarm.

The construction of the PEEP can be undertaken with the active participation of the following, Line Managers, Supervisors, Departmental Safety Co-ordinators, Student and Learning Support. The Health and Safety Unit can also supply advice and support.

The plan must be a tailor made to meet the requirements of the individual and where applicable the person/s that may be required to assist with the evacuation of the disabled person.

The PEEP is a personal plan and so must be drawn up in consultation and with the active participation of the person concerned.

If identified within the PEEP that specialist training (evacuation chair, emergency exit routes etc) is required to ensure the PEEP is undertaken safely, it will be the responsibility of the faculty, school or department to ensure that this training has been undertaken. The Health and Safety Unit can assist in providing relevant training and information.

All staff and students who could be expected to aid the evacuation of a disabled person should receive a copy of the relevant PEEP.

If the named person in the plan is a resident in a university hall a separate plan must be produced to cover the evacuation procedure from the halls. This must be undertaken with guidance and assistance from management and staff within the halls. Once completed a copy of the plan must be forwarded to the halls manager.

A practice evacuation drill should be carried out at least once a year to monitor the effectiveness of any active PEEP.

A PEEP should be activated immediately the alarm is raised.

The PEEP should address work out of normal hours or areas where close supervision is not available. A person with a mobility impairment working unaccompanied may mean that they cannot evacuate (e.g. on any floor other than the ground floor). They should report their location to the building reception (or site reception/security at MMU Cheshire) before starting work. If accompanied by a friend or colleague, that person can report their location to the reception upon evacuation (See Appendices for further information).

4. TECHNIQUES FOR THE EVACUATION OF DISABLED PEOPLE

Staff and students with a visual impairment may be guided on level surfaces by offering an arm. On stairways the guide should descend first and the person following can then place their hand on the guide's shoulder. If a member of staff or student is a guide dog user they should be asked about how/if they can be assisted. Many disabled people will be able to descend (or ascend) a stairway, however others may need assistance. There is equipment available for safely transporting people with mobility impairments in stairways. This type of equipment should be given serious consideration especially in high-rise buildings.

Lifts are normally prohibited from use during an emergency evacuation. There are types of lifts known as evacuation or fire fighting lifts, which may be used for the evacuation of disabled people. These lifts must only be operated under the direction and control of a member of staff using an agreed evacuation procedure. Property Management Performance Team will provide information on the type of lifts installed in each building and whether or not they fall into the category of an evacuation or fire fighting lift.

If it is safe to do so wheelchairs, guide dogs and other 'equipment' **must** be evacuated as well as the disabled person.

5. REFUGES

People should never be left in a refuge point to wait for the Fire and Rescue Services. The refuge can be used as a safe resting place or as a place to wait until it is safe to exit the building.

Where disabled staff and students are unable to use stairways without assistance it will be necessary to identify refuge areas. Refuges areas provide a place of relative safety for disabled staff and students **before being assisted to a final exit**. With good communication links to the refuge area it may not be necessary to evacuate from the refuge if the fire does not pose a risk or the alarm has been activated accidentally.

Refuge areas can be an enclosure such as a compartment, lobby, corridor or stairway that can provide protection from fire and smoke.

Once a refuge area has been identified it should be suitably signed and kept free from obstructions. It is essential that the location of a refuge does not have any adverse effect on the means of escape.

The disabled person's friend, colleague, assistant or the most senior member of staff present (identified in the PEEP) should report the location of the disabled person that is unable to be evacuated from the building to the responsible person in charge of the evacuation. If required the fire and rescue services can be informed of the location when they arrive.

It is essential that all refuge areas have effective communication links to a fixed or mobile staffed area to enable communication with any person/s using the refuge in an emergency.

Fire alarms sounding adjacent to refuge areas can restrict communications due to the high sound level omitted. These should be re-sited or turned down Property Management Performance Team can arrange this modification on your behalf.

Property Management Performance Team or the Health & Safety Unit can assist in the identification of a refuge area.

6. WHEELCHAIR LIFTS

Wheelchair lifts must not be used as a means of escape. Wheelchair lifts that are provided for access should not obstruct means of escape.

7. EVACUATION PROCEDURE FOR A DISABLED PERSON

- 1 On activation of the emergency alarm stop and collect belongings that may be required in the evacuation.
- 2 As detailed in your PEEP remain at your work station, place of study if you require assistance.
- 3 Once your assistance arrives (or if you don't require assistance) make your way to a designated refuge point.
- 4 Remain at your refuge point with your assistant until it is safe to evacuate. (where possible use the communication at the refuge point to ascertain if an evacuation is required or it's a false alarm).
Your refuge point will offer a minimum of 30 minutes protection against the spread of fire and smoke.
- 5 Once the area is clear if required with the support of your assistant make your way to the final exit of the building.
- 6 Once outside the building you or your assistant must report your presence to the person in charge of the evacuation.

- 7 Remain outside the building until told to return by the person in charge of the evacuation.

8. CONSTRUCTING A PEEP

The aim of the PEEP is to provide affected persons, with the necessary information to be able to manage their escape. The plan also provides the University with information to ensure that the correct level of assistance is available.

If assistance with escape is required, the extent of such assistance should be identified in the PEEP i.e. the number of assistants and the method to be used

Given the unique characteristics of buildings and the need for a PEEP to take account of the building capabilities disabled people who regularly use different buildings may have to have a separate PEEP for each building.

It should be noted that individuals may develop a temporary mobility difficulty following an accident or surgical intervention, which might affect their ability to evacuate from their normal place of work.

It is essential that the person who may require assistance is fully involved in producing the PEEP. The process can be based on a checklist to aid its development. This should include items relating to the individual's abilities, location, activities (e.g. does he or she move around the campus), etc. The following should always be included in the plan:

- identification of and information on the best method of evacuation including the availability of any horizontal evacuation routes.
- requirements for specialist equipment (such as an evacuation chair) and any requirement for training in the use of that equipment.
- identification of wheelchair-accessible fire exits.
- locations of wheelchair refuges and means of communication (if it is not possible to evacuate the individual immediately).
- information about whether the wheelchair user can reach the refuge unaided (if not, a "buddy system" might be used).
- characteristics of the building that might affect the evacuation.
- details of colleagues volunteering for the buddy system.
- training requirements.
- information on the maintenance and inspection of equipment.
- when the PEEP should be reviewed.

To be effective, the PEEP depends on the ability of helpers to respond quickly and effectively. Helpers should be given sufficient instruction, practical demonstration and training as appropriate. The plan should be tested when completed and used during regular fire drills to ensure that the disabled person and helpers are fully aware of the procedures to be undertaken and have confidence in those procedures.

Special arrangements may have to be included in the plan where it may be required to evacuate a wheelchair user using an alternative method other than normal procedures.

This procedure must be written into the plan with named people that have been trained to operate the specialist equipment.

From the information gathered in the questionnaire below, a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) should be developed by, either Departmental Health and Safety Co-ordinator, line manager, student's supervisor or Student and Academic Services. **Advice and support on writing the PEEP is available from the Health and Safety Unit.**

9. CONCLUSIONS

The safe evacuation of disabled staff and students is the responsibility of the University. Safe evacuation procedures must be pre-planned and identify the needs of disabled persons and make proper arrangements for their assistance. A PEEP must be produced with the active participation of the affected person.

Written instructions and where necessary training, are essential in ensuring a PEEP is followed and that all members of staff and students are aware of its existence.

It may be necessary to phase vertical movement of disabled persons using refuge areas and use properly designed evacuation equipment, especially in high-rise buildings.

There are minor modifications that can aid evacuation e.g. ramps, colour contrasted stair nosings and handrails (for blind and partially sighted people), visual or vibration alarms (for deaf and hard of hearing people). Any modification to buildings must be discussed with the Head of Property Management Performance Team.

Under current fire safety legislation it is the responsibility of the person(s) having responsibility for the building to provide a fire safety risk assessment that includes an emergency evacuation plan for all people likely to be in the premises and this must include disabled people.

Such an evacuation plan should **not rely upon the intervention of the Fire and Rescue Services.**

Where an employer or service provider does not make provisions for the safe evacuation of disabled people from its premises, this may be viewed as discrimination under The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA). It may also constitute a failure to comply with the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire safety) Order 2005.

Particular attention needs to be paid to the safety of disabled staff, students and visitors in emergency situations especially those with mobility or sensory impairment.

To ensure that all disabled staff, students and visitors are afforded the required help during an emergency evacuation a personal emergency evacuation plan (PEEP) should be constructed with the active participation of the affected person.

To ensure that all PEEPs are in place faculties, departments and schools must produce a (PEEP) when they are aware that a member of staff, student or visitor may experience difficulties in responding to a building emergency evacuation alarm.

Once developed the plan will describe the intended means of escape in the event of an emergency (including fire drills) and should contain all the necessary information to ensure that the disabled person is able to evacuate the premises.

Copies of this document are available on the Health & Safety Unit's web site; (www.mmu.ac.uk/humanresources/health) by email attachment and disc. Contact safety@mmu.ac.uk of 0161 247 3317

Appendix 1

EMERGENCY EVACUATION QUESTIONNAIRE FOR A DISABLED PERSON

This questionnaire is intended to be completed by disabled persons to assist the development of a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP). Please provide as much information to enable the University to develop a suitable plan.

Once developed the Plan will be the means of escape procedure in the event of an emergency (including drills). If the practice drills identifies concerns in the implementation of the evacuation, then a review should be undertaken of the effectiveness of the plan;

1. **Why you should fill in the form?**

The University has a legal responsibility to protect you from fire risks and protect your health and safety at work. The PEEP will be developed based on the information you provide.

2. **What will happen when you have completed the form?**

You will be provided with any additional information necessary about the emergency egress procedures in the building(s) you attend.

If you need assistance, the "Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan" will specify what type of assistance you need.

Name

Job Title/Course

Department/School /Unit/Area

Brief Description of Duties/Studies

LOCATION

1. **Where are you based for most of the time?**

Please name: the building, the floor and the room number.

Building

Floor

Room Number

2. Do you routinely use more than one location in this building?

YES

NO

If you feel it is necessary please provide further details below. (Please list the buildings and floors you used in each building)

AWARENESS OF EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURES

3. Are you aware of the emergency evacuation procedures which operate in the building(s) you attend?

YES

NO

4. Do you require written emergency evacuation procedures?

YES

NO

4a Do you require written emergency procedures in an alternative format?

Braille?

YES

NO

BSL

YES

NO

Tape

YES

NO

Electronic format

YES

NO

Other

YES

NO

5. Are the signs which mark emergency routes and exits clear and unobstructed?

YES

NO

EMERGENCY ALARM

6. Can you hear the fire alarm(s) in your place(s) study or work?

YES

NO

DON'T KNOW

7. Could you raise the alarm if you discovered a fire?

YES

NO

DON'T KNOW

ASSISTANCE

8. Do you need assistance to get out of your place of study/work in an emergency?

YES NO

DON'T KNOW

If **NO** please go to Question 12

9. Is anyone designated to assist you to get out in an emergency?

YES NO

DON'T KNOW

If **NO** please go to Question 11,
If **YES** give name(s) and location(s)

10. Is the arrangement with your assistant(s) a formal arrangement?
(A formal arrangement is an arrangement specified for them by the Head of Department or written into their job description or by some other procedure.)

YES NO

DON'T KNOW

- 10a Are you always in easy contact with those designated to help you?

YES NO

DON'T KNOW

11. In an emergency, could you contact the person(s) in charge of evacuating the building(s) in which you work and tell them where you were located?

YES NO

DON'T KNOW

GETTING OUT

12. Can you move quickly in the event of an emergency?

YES NO
DON'T KNOW

13. Do you find stairs difficult to use?

YES NO
DON'T KNOW

14. Are you a wheelchair user?

YES NO

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

The information you have given us will help us to meet any needs for information or assistance you may have.

Please return the completed form to:

Head of Department or Departmental Health and Safety Co-ordinator.

The people that are constructing your PEEP

Appendix 2

To be completed by Head of Department or Departmental Safety Co-ordinator.

PERSONAL EMERGENCY EVACUATION PLAN

Name

Department

Building

Floor

Room Number

AWARENESS OF PROCEDURE

The disabled person is informed of a fire evacuation by:

existing alarm system

pager device

visual alarm system

Other (please specify)

DESIGNATED ASSISTANCE:

(The following people have been designated to give me assistance to get out of the building in an emergency).

Name

Contact details

Name

Contact details

Name

Contact details

METHODS OF ASSISTANCE:

(eg: Transfer procedures, methods of guidance, etc.)

EQUIPMENT PROVIDED (including means of communication):

EVACUATION PROCEDURE:

(A step by step account beginning from the first alarm)

SAFE ROUTE(S):

The PEEP should be reviewed whenever there is a change in circumstances or otherwise, it should be reviewed annually.

Appendix 3

