

## Fire- and Life-Safety Group (FLS)

# Emergency Evacuation Guidelines for People with Disabilities

## Preparing for an Emergency Evacuation

Preparing for an emergency evacuation can greatly reduce the risk to your safety during a fire, flood, storm, or other dangerous situation. In order to help people with disabilities prepare for an emergency evacuation, FLS has organized the following recommendations based on *NFPA's Emergency Planning Guide for People with Disabilities*. Disabilities may include: physical/systemic, blind/low vision, deaf/hard of hearing, psychiatric/psychological, speech, and/or cognitive. These guidelines also apply to persons with temporary injuries, e.g., a broken leg. FLS strongly encourages those with any disability to read through these guidelines to ensure that you are prepared for an emergency evacuation. If you need further assistance in preparing for an evacuation, please contact the Fire- and Life-Safety Group at 303-492-4042.

### Guidelines

1. If there is an alarm system where you work or take classes, familiarize yourself with the alarms. Determine if there is an alarm that will alert you to an emergency, e.g., whether strobes exist to notify hearing impaired persons to evacuate, and whether the alarm audibility is adequate for others. [1]
2. Familiarize yourself with the buildings' exit routes. Become aware of the buildings' stairwells and corridors noting any areas that may be difficult or impossible for you to traverse by yourself. Determine whether there is an exit path that you will be able to use in case of an emergency. If possible, identify at least two separate escape paths. Please note: In most cases, this means being able to exit the building without the use of an elevator. [1]
3. If you do not need assistance evacuating or being alerted to an alarm, you should run through a practice evacuation to verify you will not need assistance and to uncover any weaknesses in your plan. [1]
4. If you will need assistance in evacuating the building for any reason, follow preparation steps 5-11, below. [1]
5. Contact a group of friends or co-workers who would be able to assist you in an evacuation or notify emergency responders to assist you. This group should meet the following guidelines.
  - A. For employees, the group should be in the same building in which you work. For students, the group should be in your class. [1]
  - B. The group should be selected so that it is not likely that they will all be away to an off-site meeting, sick, or on vacation at the same time. [1]

- C. The group should consist of the number of people required to successfully evacuate you plus at least two alternates. This is to account for those friends/coworkers that may be offsite. [1]
  - D. You should be sure that the person(s) helping you are physically able to do the required tasks and that you trust them. [1]
6. Tell the group of friends or co-workers what kind of assistance you will need. Make sure that they are comfortable with your requests. [1]
  7. Coworkers/friends should not risk their own life/safety when assisting you. If your coworkers/friends are unable to assist you without risking their life/safety, urge them to exit the building immediately and notify authorities of your location. If possible, before exiting, your coworkers/friends should assist you to a sheltered location, possibly a fully enclosed exit stair.
  8. Designate a place where you will meet those who will be assisting you with your evacuation. [1] For employees, a good location may be your office or workspace or a space next to a stairwell in which you will not block other evacuees. For students, a good location will probably be near the door to your classroom.
  9. Determine a method to contact those who will be assisting you. [1]
    - A. For employees, FLS recommends a dry erase board be placed by your designated meeting area. The text on the board should state whether you are on- or off-site. If you are on-site, your assistants will know that they may need to assist you. If you are off-site, they will know you do not need assistance.
    - B. For students, your assistants will attend the same class, so face to face contact can be used with cell phones as a backup to call **9-1-1**.
  10. Keep the necessary evacuation equipment such as a stair-descent chair nearby. [1]
  11. Regularly review and practice your evacuation plan. Practice solidifies everyone's grasp of the plan, assists others in recognizing the person who may need assistance in an emergency, and brings to light any weaknesses in the plan. [1]
  12. Update your plan to reflect changes in exit routes or contact methods, e.g., friends/coworkers that will assist you. [1]

## Evacuation

1. Go to your designated meeting spot. [2]
2. When both you and your friends/coworkers arrive, evacuate via the shortest and safest route. [2]
3. Check paths for safety before proceeding and close doors behind you. [2]
4. A member of your group should test doors with the back of the hand before opening them. If the door is warm or if someone notices smoke, use an alternative escape route. [2]
5. If possible, crawl low if you have to go through smoke. [2]
6. After safely exiting, go to a safe area or to a pre-assigned exterior area for your building. [2]
7. If you suspect that someone is missing or trapped, contact the emergency personnel outside the building. [2]
8. If you are trapped or unable to evacuate during a fire emergency, close all doors between you and the fire. Stuff cracks around the doors to keep out smoke. Wait at a safe window and signal/call for help. If there is a phone in the room, call the fire department or **9-1-1** and tell them exactly where you are. [2]
9. If your clothing catches fire, stop, drop and roll to help extinguish your clothing fire. If you have physical limitations, a friend may be able to help you smother the flames, e.g., cover the flames with a heavy material like a coat or blanket.

**NOTE:** Links to *NFPA's Emergency Planning Guide for People with Disabilities* and *U.S. Department of Education Emergency Evacuation of People with Physical Disabilities 2004 Conference Proceedings* are listed below.

[NFPA's Emergency Planning Guide for People with Disabilities](#)

[U.S. Department of Education Emergency Evacuation of People with Physical Disabilities 2004 Conference Proceedings](#)

*Sources for Guidelines*

1. *NFPA's Emergency Planning Guide for People with Disabilities.*
2. *Guidelines that are posted on our website for people without disabilities.*