

BUILDING EVACUATION PROCEDURES FOR PERSONS WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES

Persons with a physical disability are in many cases limited in their ability to evacuate by means of stairwells. It is primarily for this type of disability that the following procedures apply.

Procedure When an Alarm Sounds

Ground Level

If you can evacuate the building at ground level, a Building Emergency Team member (BET) or a volunteer should escort you to a safe location away from the building.

Above or below the ground floor

1. Seek a safe area with or without the assistance of a BET.
2. When there is a fire alarm, if possible, phone Campus Police at 911 to inform them of your location, circumstance and intentions.
3. Tell the Campus Police communication officer that your fire alarm is sounding but you have a disability and cannot leave your floor area. If you smell smoke, or are in immediate danger, immediately inform the communications officer.
4. The Building Emergency Team (BET) has been instructed to ask and help you to identify the location where you will wait for evacuation. They are not trained to lift and carry you out of the building. Please ask someone to remain in the building with you until trained rescue workers arrive from the fire department. Make sure someone both from the evacuation team or a volunteer has noted your location, floor and the stairwell and, that this person will notify the authorities of your need for assistance.
5. Provide the phone number and extension you are calling from. It is IMPERATIVE that this number can receive return calls. Note that PAY telephones generally **cannot** receive incoming calls.

Campus Police have radio contact with officers at the scene and will provide you with updates on the situation via the phone number you provide. In the event that your safety could be compromised, Firefighters will assist in your safe evacuation. At any time, you can also call back for an update.

Note: London Fire Services and Campus Community Police will all respond to the scene within 2-3 minutes of a fire alarm.

Availability of Telephones

It is reasonable to assume that if a building is occupied and open for business, telephones will be available in offices, etc. In cases, such as evening lectures where only the lecture theatre or classroom is open, you are encouraged to contact the Campus Community Police by calling 911.

1. Make sure the Building Emergency Team (BET) can easily locate you (Monday – Friday during working hours). Please ask for help from your professors, classmates or coworkers to evacuate in case no member of the evacuation team is on your floor.
2. It is part of the professor's responsibilities to assist with the emergency evacuation of his/her class. Whenever possible, the procedures to be taken for the evacuation of a person with disability must be discussed fully with the individual. Coworkers also are to be informed so there is a mutual understanding of the impairment, and the procedures to initiate during an evacuation.

The person(s) with the disability is usually the best judge of his/her abilities and can provide valuable assistance in developing an evacuation plan. Persons having a sensory impairment (blindness, deafness, etc.) or a minor physical impairment can, with the assistance of their Building Emergency Team members, usually evacuate as quickly and safely as other building occupants. If this is the case, they may be permitted to carry out regular evacuation procedures. However, these persons may require at least one Building Emergency Team Member to alert them of the alarm, if necessary, and to assist them to evacuate.

For fire safety planning purposes, a physical disability which, even with the aid of Building Emergency Team Members, would prevent that person from descending the stairs in an evacuation situation at a rate of speed consistent with the normal flow of other building occupants, or which would cause such person physical harm if they attempted to descend the stairs.

In building fire evacuation exercises, the Building Emergency Team Members and persons with a disability are to carry out the actions they would normally carry out in an emergency (i.e., respond to the prearranged location on the floor area). In a drill situation, it is not necessary for persons with a disability to evacuate the building completely. This action in fact could be potentially dangerous for these persons and their Building Emergency Team Members, as well as for the other occupants of the building.

Upon initiation of a fire alarm, the Building Emergency Team Members will respond with the persons with a disability to a pre-arranged location on the floor area, but not blocking evacuation traffic. The Building Emergency Coordinator will ensure that the floor is cleared as per normal evacuation procedures and the initial flow of the evacuees has diminished.

In all situations, the Building Emergency Team Members will ensure that a person is assigned to report to the Building Emergency Team Coordinator or Emergency Personnel immediately upon evacuation that the floor is clear and the number of persons with a disability, Building Emergency Team Members, etc. evacuating at a slower rate and what stairwell they are utilizing, so that assistance may be dispatched if available.

If for any reason the evacuation of a person(s) with a disability must be suspended and the people involved take refuge on a floor area other than their own, the Building Emergency Team Members must make every effort to alert the Building Emergency Team Coordinator or other Emergency Personnel of their location. This can be done by advising other evacuees as they proceed down the stairs by keeping a watch for would-be rescuers, searchers or fire fighters proceeding up the stairs, by using the telephone or by waving or shouting from a window to alert bystanders and/or arriving emergency personnel.

The Building Emergency Team Members or designated person must immediately advise the Building Emergency Team Coordinator or Emergency Personnel when the evacuation of persons with a physical disability has been completed. It should be noted that telephone communications remain intact in many fire situations and an attempt should always be made to utilize this means of communication to either contact Campus Community Police Service or the Fire Department.

Occupants who require assistance in evacuating during an alarm are responsible for:

- o Advising their Building Emergency Team Coordinator or Western Fire Safety so that a pre-plan can be established;
- o Assisting the Building Emergency Team Coordinator or Western Fire Safety in appointing Building Emergency Team members;
- o Telling their Building Emergency Team members how much help they may need; and
- o Practicing the evacuation procedures.

Please send any unanswered questions or concerns to firesaftey@uwo.ca