

AIDS TO THE DISABLED

GENERAL INFORMATION

In general, safety considerations which apply to the University Community should also be applied to the physically disabled. It should be noted, however, that the physically disabled individual does possess needs which require special consideration to insure that safe procedures exist to provide an appropriate evacuation plan for emergency situations. General considerations include, but are not limited to, the following items.

FIRE SAFETY AND DEVELOPMENT OF SAFETY PROCEDURES

This topic is of particular importance in many areas of the University Community, but is of particular concern in academic buildings and residence halls, as well as buildings such as the Student Center, Prescott Library, and other areas which provide student support services.

Specific measures designed to provide updated procedures and training for campus personnel are important to insure equal safety for disabled individuals. Evacuation plans for disabled individuals shall be a joint effort of all departments and agencies likely to be involved in an emergency.

A clearly-displayed procedure and floorplan-exit map shall be posted on each floor in all buildings. Additionally, each building shall have designated Building Monitors who are familiar with the function of the building, as well as special problems related to his/her facility.

Responsibility for specific duties shall be determined during the development of the emergency evacuation plan.

SPECIAL PROBLEMS

It is imperative to note that the physically disabled individual will, in some cases, present special conditions for University and Departmental individuals to consider when implementing emergency evacuation procedures. Included in this category are the visually impaired, hearing impaired, and mobility impaired (must utilize crutches or wheelchair).

It is imperative that any procedures designed to facilitate a higher degree of safety should not overlook the fact that specific disabilities will require adaptive measures. The importance of stairwell refuge areas becomes an area of specific concern.

The current thinking of fire safety professionals is that handicapped persons should not use elevators in case of fire. Most buildings have stair enclosures with landings large enough to accommodate wheelchairs. Enclosed stairways are relatively smoke free. Some smoke may enter the stairway at the fire floor, but not enough to make it untenable if doors are closed. During a fire, elevators may become inoperative due to electrical failure and cannot stop between floors. Elevator shafts and cars are not smoke resistant and could therefore become filled with smoke. Therefore, disabled people who are unable to negotiate stairs should go to an enclosed stairway and wait for rescue. In case there is no stair enclosure, disabled people who can find no

assistance should enter a room with a solid door (no louvers or ordinary glass), close the door, call the University Police at 257-4018, and wait for rescue.

Designated employees should be alert for handicapped persons who might be in their area and lend

whatever aid is necessary. Additionally, movement of individuals from wheelchairs to the exterior areas is not suggested for individuals who have no experience with providing such assistance. It should be noted that the most effective method of assisting the disabled person can be determined by asking him/her. The designated Building Monitor could provide specific coordination in planning for this type of contingency. A means of assuring that the visually impaired and hearing impaired can utilize the existing fire evacuation measures must be given consideration. Providing assistance and/or information to visually impaired or hearing impaired individuals during a fire drill or emergency can be accomplished with a minimal amount of difficulty provided that certain measures have been implemented.

As a general rule, it is often difficult to differentiate between a fire drill (or prank) and an actual emergency. Therefore, it is recommended that each circumstance be considered to be potentially hazardous. The visually impaired individual can be assisted from a building utilizing appropriate sight-guiding techniques. It is imperative that individuals with hearing impairments receive the information that an evacuation process is in progress. It is not necessary to have a knowledge of sign language (manual communication) in order to convey the message that the fire alarm has been activated. In the event that the person is unaware of the designated evacuation area, someone should be designated to provide assistance to the appropriate exit.

TRAVEL/MOBILITY

It is of primary importance that the campus walks and other traffic areas do not become dangerous from a mixture of mobility impaired individuals, pedestrians, bicycles, and motorcycles in competition for existing sidewalks and traffic space. A visually impaired person or an individual who must utilize a wheelchair for mobility cannot compete with bicycles, skateboards, etc., for use of sidewalks, ramps, and other clearly designated traffic areas. The simple courtesies of not blocking handicapped ramps with other vehicles, requiring an extra movement for a disabled person to cross an intersection, etc., should be practiced throughout the entire University Community.