

EMERGENCY EVACUATION GUIDELINES FOR PERSONS NEEDING ASSISTANCE

Purpose

The intent of these guidelines is to provide a safe environment for all individuals, including persons needing assistance, during emergency evacuations. Persons with disabilities are encouraged to contact University Human Resources and/or Student Disability Resources to determine accommodations that may be necessary to maintain safety, for these needs may vary on a case-by-case basis and by individual and location. Building accessibility locations are available on the [FP&M Campus Map](#) by activating the Accessibility layer.

Develop a Plan

Knowledge and preparation by every individual, both by those with and without disabilities, is essential to reduce the risk of injury and harm during emergencies. Individuals on ISU property are responsible for becoming familiar with the emergency information regarding work areas, classrooms, and/or living areas. This includes emergency evacuation plans comprising: exits, alternate routes of egress, the location of fire alarm pull stations, portable fire extinguishers and respective emergency meeting places.

Guidance for Persons with Disabilities in an Emergency Evacuation

- Know at least 2 evacuation routes for each building ([EH&S Building Information](#)).
- Do not use elevators in an evacuation.
- Be familiar with designated “Fire Rescue Sites” if provided in the building.
- Determine how to best communicate with others during an emergency and consider alternative communication methods.
- Prepare a disaster supplies kit including items such as disability related equipment, communication devices, assistance animal food, and 3 days’ worth of medication.
- Have a list of all medications and medical conditions with you.
- Attach written instructions to all disability related equipment.
- Have easy access to emergency contact information at all times.
- Participate in drills according to the established individualized evacuation plan.
- If using a personal care attendant through an agency, check to see if the agency would provide services through another location if an evacuation were ordered.

Evacuation Options

Horizontal Evacuation: Use ground level exits to the outside or go into unaffected wings of multi-story buildings.

Stairway Evacuation: Use stairs to reach ground level exits. Do not use elevators.

Fire Rescue Sites: Proceed to a marked “Fire Rescue Site” if provided in the building.

Stay in Place: In sprinkler protected buildings or if an area of rescue is not available, remain in a room with an exterior window, a phone, and a solid or fire resistant door unless danger is imminent.

Guidance for Assisting Persons with Disabilities

Persons with disabilities may require special consideration in an emergency due to potential dependence on mechanical aids or the assistance of others. Visible and hidden disabilities may become debilitating under the stress and strain of an emergency.

- If you choose to assist someone in an emergency situation, do not expose yourself or others to unnecessary risk by attempting to provide assistance beyond your ability.
- Always ask whether the person needs assistance before acting and explain what needs to be done.
- Allow the individual the opportunity to define specific needs and wishes to you. Offer assistance, but let the person explain what help is needed.
- Be patient, especially in an emergency situation where time is critical.
- Allow the disabled individuals to make independent decisions as fully as possible.
- Respect that the person with the disability may be the best authority on how to be evacuated.
- Carrying a person is not advisable except in the most extreme of circumstances.
- Be aware that an assistance animal's sense of direction may become confused during an emergency.
- Do not abandon the person after exiting a building. Accompany the individual to a safe place with others.
- Provide adequate notice that potential danger exists and when evacuation should begin.
- Assign office, class, and event locations in the most accessible locations, when possible.
- Ensure egress routes and "Fire Rescue Sites" are clear and properly marked.
- Participate in and help identify gaps in evacuation plans during practice drills.

Assisting Persons Who Use Wheelchairs and other Non-Ambulatory Persons

- Always ask whether the person needs assistance before acting and explain what needs to be done.
- A wheelchair is part of the user's body space and should be respected. Never maneuver a person's chair without permission.
- Ask how the chair operates and if there are any special operational instructions.
- When feasible, be sure to lock the brake when transferring the person in or out of the chair.
- Prior to moving the person, check for life support equipment.
- Be cautious in attempting to lift an individual from a wheelchair. This should only be done in the most extreme of circumstances. Do not use a wheelchair to transport an individual down or up stairs.
- Avoid narrow doorways and openings, stairs, bumpy surfaces, and wet floors. Be alert for objects in your path.
- Position the person in the safest place possible according to the emergency, preferably a designated "Fire Rescue Site".
- Alert emergency personnel of the person's location.
- Be aware that the wheelchair user might be able to walk with the assistance of a cane, crutches or braces.

Assisting Persons with Mobility Limitation – Non-Wheelchair Users

- Always ask whether the person needs assistance before acting and explain what needs to be done.
- Do not interfere with the person's movement via physical touch, unless directed; give the individual space to evacuate if desired.
- Do not interfere with the person's movement.
- Clear displaced and fallen obstacles from egress routes.
- If the stairs are crowded, you may act as a buffer.
- Provide railing access for those with limited mobility.

- Some people may need to descend the stairs sitting down; be sure to provide space so the individual is not stepped on.

Assisting Persons with Limited Communication

- Always ask whether the person needs assistance before acting and explain what needs to be done.
- Look for an instruction card on the person.
- During an evacuation, give clear instructions.
- Maintain eye contact with individual to ensure directions are heard and understood.
- Be patient and allow the person time to speak.

Assisting Deaf or Hard of Hearing Persons (D/HH)

- Always ask whether the person needs assistance before acting and explain what needs to be done.
- Face a D/HH person directly and speak naturally, even if an interpreter is present. The deaf person may be trying to read your lips. Do not cover your face with your hands or other objects that you may be holding. The person may be trying to see your facial expressions. Eye contact is important also.
- Wave or tap the person gently on the shoulder or arm to attract attention since the D/HH person may not be aware there is an alarm.
- Flick the light to get attention in a crowded room, especially to attract the attention of a D/HH person. Rapid, repeated flickering would be considered rude in an everyday situation, but is deemed appropriate in an emergency.
- Have a means of communication available so that both you and the D/HH person can communicate in writing or text using mobile devices.
- Do not allow others to interrupt you, or the D/HH person, during your conversation. Distractions may result in confusion.
- Use your natural gestures to communicate urgency, e.g., “come on”, “get out”, etc.
- Hearing aids or an implant may not be adequate in an emergency situation. Aids and implants amplify background noise, and may create an uncomfortable noise level during the bustle of an emergency.

Assisting Persons Who Are Blind or Have Low Vision

- Always ask whether the person needs assistance before acting and explain what needs to be done.
- Speak naturally and directly to the blind or low vision person, not through a third party. Do not shout.
- Explain who you are, why you are there, and what needs to be done.
- Ask the person’s name and use it when speaking to the person.
- Offer your help, but let the person choose what help is needed. If assisted by a service animal, ask how to best work together. The service animal may be able to follow you out of the building.
- Let the individual take your elbow for walking. The person may wish to walk slightly behind you in order to gauge your reactions to obstacles and curbs. Always explain what you want to do ahead of time. You should provide verbal cues when maneuvering around obstacles or corners and going up or down changes in elevation.
- Let the person tell you what is desired or needed.

Assisting Persons with Psychological Disabilities

- Always ask whether the person needs assistance before acting and explain what needs to be done.
- Make sure exits and safe areas are clearly marked prior to an emergency.
- Understand that the person may have difficulties in concentrating, handling stress, and initiating personal contact.
- Help reduce stress during an emergency by:
 - Offering to escort the person through the evacuation.
 - Giving clear and simple instructions.

Assisting Persons with Medical Conditions

- Always ask whether the person needs assistance before acting and explain what needs to be done.
- Medical conditions include, for example, pregnancy, respiratory or cardiac problems.
- Offer assistance walking down stairs.
- Find ways to reduce stress, exertion, and exposure to dust or smoke.
- Remind the person to bring medication or inhalers.
- Allow rest periods during an evacuation if possible.

Assisting Persons with Assistance Animals

- Always ask whether the person needs assistance before acting and explain what needs to be done.
- Do not pet, distract, interact with, make eye contact with, talk to, take pictures of or otherwise bother an assistance animal. Do not offer food or water unless requested by the handler.
- Plan for the assistance animal to be evacuated with the handler.
- In the event that you are asked to handle the assistance animal while assisting the individual, hold the leash and not the harness.
- Be aware assistance animals may fear metal grated steps.