

Evacuating People with Disabilities

VISUALLY IMPAIRED PERSONS

Most visually impaired persons will be familiar with their immediate area. In the event of an emergency, tell the person the nature of the emergency and offer to guide the person (this is the preferred method when acting as a "Sighted Guide"). As you walk, tell the person where you are and advise them of obstacles. When you have reached the [Designated Evacuation Area](#), orient the person to where they are and ask if any further assistance is needed.

HEARING IMPAIRED PERSONS

Most of the buildings on campus are equipped with visual evacuation alarms, however, some are not. Therefore, persons with impaired hearing may not notice emergency alarms and will need to be notified by an alternate method:

- Write a note stating what the emergency is and what the required action "**Fire alarm - go out the front door to the parking lot. Follow me.**"
- Turn the room lights on & off to gain attention - then **indicate through hand gestures or writing** (on a whiteboard or a note) what is happening, what to do, or where to go.

PERSONS USING CRUTCHES, CANES OR WALKERS

Ask the person what assistance is needed, and if unable to use the stairs, follow the directions below for persons using wheelchairs.

PERSONS USING WHEELCHAIRS

Seek the assistance of a **Safety Marshal** (identified in an orange vest) or other individuals who might be able to assist when attempting to evacuate persons using wheelchairs from a multi-story building. Immediate evacuation should only be attempted if a life-threatening situation is imminent. **Do not use the elevators.**

If you cannot locate a Safety Marshal, move the person in a wheelchair or using crutches, a cane, or a walker into the exit stairwell landing. If possible, have someone stay with the person until emergency personnel arrive. Keep the door **closed (to keep smoke out)** and report the location to emergency personnel (Campus Safety/Police/Fire Department).

A non-ambulatory person's needs and preferences may be specific to their condition. If a person must be removed from a wheelchair, ask about preferences with regard to:

- Ways of being removed from the wheelchair.
- Movement of extremities when lifting (may be limited due to pain, catheter leg bags, spasticity, braces, etc.).
- What to do once removed from the wheelchair (place on a stretcher, chair with cushion, pad, car seat, or perhaps wait for paramedic assistance).

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Wheelchairs have many movable or weak parts which are not constructed to withstand the stress of lifting (the seat bar, foot plates, wheels, movable arm rests).
- Some people in wheelchairs have electric artificial respirators attached. They should be given priority assistance if there is smoke or fumes, as their ability to breathe is in serious jeopardy, and their breathing equipment may be an additional peril.

- Be aware that some wheelchair-bound individuals have impaired upper trunk or neck strength.
- If a wheelchair must be left behind, move it away from an exit path or doorway.
- If attempting to move a power wheelchair, remove the batteries. Make sure the foot rests are locked and the motor is off.
- If a seat belt is available, secure the person in the chair.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) | [ready.gov/individuals-access-functional-needs](https://www.ready.gov/individuals-access-functional-needs)
- Earthquake Country Alliance | [EarthquakeCountry.org/disability](https://www.EarthquakeCountry.org/disability)
- California Office of Emergency Services | [Caloes.ca.gov/cal-oes-divisions/access-functional-needs](https://www.Caloes.ca.gov/cal-oes-divisions/access-functional-needs)