



# University Health & Safety Policy Manual

## Supplementary Document 12

### Emergency Egress for People with Disabilities: **Policy**

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## 1. Introduction

In accordance with national regulations and good practice it is the policy of the University of Southampton to ensure the managed emergency egress of all its staff, students and visitors, including those with various disabilities. This document provides details of this policy. An associated document gives guidance about how the policy is to be implemented, and includes details of where responsibilities lie for discharging the policy.

## 2. Policy

### 2.1 Building Related Issues – Construction

**2.1.1** New buildings will be built in accordance with the requirements of the relevant British Standards and parts B and M of the Building Regulations and will include areas which may be used as temporary ‘refuges in case of emergency.

It should be noted that a refuge is used only until a person can be evacuated; it is not intended that a disabled person should wait in a refuge until the arrival of the emergency services.

**2.1.2** Existing buildings will be adapted during the rolling programme of refurbishments and/or following a request for access/egress to meet the requirements of the relevant British Standards and/or Parts B and M of the Building Regulations where this is reasonably practicable. In particular:

- ‘refuges’ will be created and formally designated, and
- reasonable adjustments will be made to buildings to allow the safe evacuation of those with disabilities.

Fire risk assessments of buildings will identify ‘reasonable adjustments’ and work will be carried out on a priority basis identified in the fire risk assessment.

**2.1.3** New buildings with more than one floor will have at least one fire protected evacuation lift - designed in accordance with relevant British Standards - to all levels.

**2.1.4** Existing lifts in buildings will be converted to evacuation lifts where this is reasonably practicable. Conversion will be on a priority basis (see associated guidance document).

**2.1.5** Refuges will be clearly signed and provided with the means of two-way communication, in accordance with the relevant British Standard.

- The University is working towards installing vibrating pager or equivalent systems to assist the evacuation of those with hearing impairments. Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) will identify people who require such a pager.
- In Halls of Residence, where a prospective report identifies a student with a severe hearing impairment, the ‘reasonable

adjustments' (2.1.2) will normally require that a vibrating device and/or flashing alarm is installed in the student's bedroom and any en suite and other bathroom facilities. The Hall Manager should confirm that these and other 'reasonable adjustments' are in place before a student takes up their residence.

## 2.2 Building Related Issues – Use

**2.2.1** Heads of Schools and Professional Services will ensure that all necessary emergency evacuation plans are in place, including general building evacuation plans, Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs), and plans for using evacuation lifts where installed.

**2.2.2** Heads of Schools and Professional Services, with advice from the Health and Safety Office, will appoint suitable volunteers in sufficient numbers to assist with the evacuation of disabled people.

**2.2.3** All those appointed to assist in the evacuation of disabled people will be trained to enable them to carry out their roles. Training will be repeated at suitable intervals to ensure maintenance of the appropriate skills/knowledge. The duties of those appointed to provide assistance will be acknowledged in their job description and will be an item for discussion during staff appraisal.

- Lectures involving those with mobility impairments who do not need assistance in an emergency will, wherever feasible, be held in lecture theatres which have appropriate egress arrangements to facilitate their independence.
- Lectures involving people who need assistance to evacuate buildings in an emergency will, so far as is reasonably practicable, be held in lecture theatres on the ground floor, or those that have direct horizontal escape to a position of safety, ideally the outside.
- Those giving lectures have a general role of taking charge of the audience/class and shepherding people out of exits and to assembly points in the event of an emergency. They have no additional role in the emergency evacuation of disabled people UNLESS this is identified in a PEEP and has been discussed between all parties beforehand, and agreed.
- Heads of Professional Services and Schools with responsibility for 'public use' buildings and areas will develop generic procedures for the safe evacuation of students, staff and visitors with disabilities.

**2.2.8** Staff who invite visitors into buildings must consider the need to ensure the safe evacuation of their visitors in case of an emergency. Visitors who need assistance to evacuate a building should be met on the ground floor. If it is essential that such a visitor go to floors other than the ground floor, the member of staff directly responsible for inviting the visitor must ensure that a PEEP is in place for the duration of the visit.

**2.2.9** Students in halls of residence with mobility or other impairments who need assistance to evacuate a building will be provided with accommodation at ground level. Any student who either acquires (or discloses a previously unknown) mobility impairment during their period of residence can be required to move to a ground floor room on health and safety grounds. As no halls currently have a lift which meets emergency egress standards, any students who are unable to egress independently from upper floors must be made aware that they should not use lifts to visit friends, etc., as the University cannot make arrangements for their safe egress.

**2.2.10** PEEPs for students in halls of residence will be prepared by the Hall Manager. Hall Managers will be alerted to such students by the prospective report issued by the Disability and Mentor Service to the Accommodation Office and the Hall Manager will ensure that appropriate PEEPs which maintain optimal independence for students resident in halls have been produced and reviewed regularly (at least once per annum). The Disability and Mentor Service will liaise with Hall Managers and care staff to ensure the involvement of care staff in cases where students have 24-hour care. Copies of the current PEEPs will be lodged with the Health and Safety Office and Disability and Mentor Service.

**2.2.11** Where feasible and appropriate, staff with serious mobility impairments will be allocated workspace on the ground floor.

**2.2.12** Those responsible for planning graduation, open days and similar public events should plan events in accessible spaces where possible and will publicise any restrictions on access (*e.g.* access to ground floor areas only) if this is not practicable.

Event organisers must put in place arrangements to ensure the safe evacuation of any attendees with mobility impairments.

**2.2.13** Where an evacuation lift is installed, there must be a building management plan detailing how it is used. Those who normally occupy a building must devise the plan and manage the operation of an evacuation lift.

## **2.3 Personal Emergency Egress Plans (PEEPs)**

**2.3.1** All staff and students who need assistance to evacuate one or more buildings, will have a Personal Emergency Egress Plan (PEEP) for each of the buildings that they use routinely. The Head of School/Service is responsible for ensuring that the PEEP is drawn up. The Health and Safety Office and Disability and Mentor Service can advise on PEEPs.

**2.3.2** The Head of the School or Professional Service in which a member of staff/ student who requires a PEEP is employed/registered, will ensure that all necessary PEEPs are produced even though some of the buildings for which a PEEP may be required are not considered School/Professional Service space. However, for a student resident in a Hall, responsibility for producing

the PEEP lies with the Halls Manager. These duties can be delegated.

**2.3.3** Human Resources will inform the Head of School or Professional Service of any disabilities affecting egress for a prospective member of staff.

**2.3.4** The Disability and Mentor Service will inform the Head of School, via the prospective report to the Admissions Tutor, of any disability affecting egress for a prospective student. The Disability and Mentor Service will likewise inform the Hall Manager, via the prospective report to the Accommodation Office, of any disability affecting egress for a prospective student likely to be resident in Hall.

**2.3.5** The Head of School or Professional Service will ensure that all PEEPs are reviewed at appropriate regular intervals. For students, this will usually be at least once per semester because of timetabling issues. The maximum review period will be annually. The number of PEEPs developed and the results of reviews will be included in the School/Professional Service annual health and safety report.

**2.3.6** A copy of all PEEPs will be sent to the Health and Safety Office and Disability and Mentor Service.

**2.3.7** PEEPs will be practised at least annually and more often if individual circumstances require. Ideally, a practice will always take place as part of a normal building fire drill. People with disabilities are not excused the need to undertake practice by reason of their disability.

- Where a specific physical barrier to egress is identified in a building which a disabled person needs to use regularly, this should be discussed in the PEEP. Estates and Facilities and the Health and Safety Office should be contacted to discuss possibilities for making 'reasonable adjustments' to that building. Where 'reasonable adjustments' are not possible (or not feasible within the necessary timeframe), other arrangements must be considered.

**2.3.8** Where specialist equipment is required to facilitate emergency egress, *e.g.* an Evac+chair, this should be identified in the PEEP. This equipment will need to be purchased by the School or Professional Service as there is no longer a centrally available resource. The School/Service should discuss the acquisition of the emergency evacuation equipment with the Health and Safety Office.